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Allegiances

[image]

Windclan

Leader:
Stormstar – *A tom with a dark gray pelt and green eyes.*

Deputy:
Crowpelt – *A she-cat with a black pelt and yellow eyes.*

Medicine Cat:
Creamleaf – *A she-cat with a cream pelt and green eyes.*

Warriors:
Frogclaw – *A tom with an orange pelt and blue eyes.*
Hawktalon – *A tom with a gray tabby pelt and green eyes.*
Grassfoot – *A she-cat with a yellow pelt with black spots and blue eyes. Was a kitty pet. Original name: Graci*
Birdtail – *A she-cat with a tortoiseshell pelt and blue eyes and an usually long tail.* **Apprentice:** Lizardpaw
Bounceheart – *A she-cat with a brown pelt and green eyes.*
Thrushclaw – *A tom with a white pelt and brown eyes.* **Apprentice:** Acornpaw
Deerstrut – *A tom with a brown tabby pelt and a white underbelly and blue eyes.* **Apprentice:** Snakepaw
Rabbitear – *A tom with a light gray pelt and yellow eyes and usually long ears.*
Sunspots – *A she-cat with a yellow pelt with white paws and green eyes.* **Apprentice:** Amberpaw
Eagleeye – *A tom with a ginger pelt and brown eyes and a stub tail.* **Apprentice:** Raccoonpaw
Scarletnose – *A she-cat with a cinnamon pelt and blue eyes.*
Barktooth – *A tom with a bark brown pelt and yellow eyes.*
Honeypelt – *A she-cat with a beautiful honey colored pelt and ice blue eyes.*
Falconwing – *A tom with a gray pelt with white spots, and yellow eyes.*

Apprentices:
Raccoonpaw – *A tom with a white pelt and brown eyes and a black face.*
Lizardpaw – *A she-cat with a black tabby pelt and green eyes.*
Snakepaw – *A tom with a tan pelt and blue eyes. Also missing a claw on the front left foot.*
Amberpaw – *A she-cat with an amber pelt and yellow eyes.*
Acornpaw – *A tom with a black gray pelt and hazel eyes.*

Queens:
Cinderstripe – *A she-cat with a dark gray pelt and blue eyes. Mother to Grindkit (a tom with an orange pelt and hazel eyes), Redkit (a tom with a red pelt and blue eyes, and Horsekit (a she-kit white pelt with orange spots and purple eyes)*
Flowerpetal – *A she-cat with a yellow pelt and brown eyes. Mother to Cavekit (a tom with cream pelt and blue eyes) and Gorgekit (a she-kit with a tan pelt with green eyes)*
Whiteheart – *A she-cat with a brown pelt with white dapples and yellow eyes.*
Cherrymoon– *A she-cat with an orange pelt and a limp in her back leg and ice blue eyes. Her kits were found in the forest, left from a rogue or loner. Foster mother to Dustkit (a tom with a cinnamon pelt and brown eyes), Whirlkit (a tom with a white pelt with brown spots and brown eyes), Cloverkit (a she-kit with a dark gray pelt and blue eyes), and Rainkit (a she-kit with a black pelt and one white back paw and green eyes)*

Elders:
Soilnose – *A tom with a dirty blonde pelt and ice blue eyes.*
Hazelpelt – *A she-cat with a hazel pelt and green eyes.*

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Thunderclan

Leader:
Lightningstar – *A tom with a yellow pelt and green eyes.*

Deputy:
Strikeclaw – *A tom with a white pelt with black dapples and blue eyes.*

Medicine Cat:
Rosepelt – *A she-cat with a brown pelt and blue eyes.*

Warriors:
Pearlnose – *A she-cat with a orange tabby pelt and green eyes.*
Apprentice: Frostpaw
Smalltail – *A tom with a blue gray pelt and yellow eyes. Has an unusually small tail.*
Opalheart – *A she-cat with a black pelt and amber eyes.* **Apprentice:** Treepaw
Fawnpelt – *A she-cat with a fawn pelt and blue eyes.*
Fireclaw – *A tom with a flame colored pelt and green eyes.*
Apprentice: Hailpaw
Shrewpelt – *A she-cat with a gray red pelt and yellow eyes.*
Leafwind – *A she-cat with a brown tan pelt and one blue eye, and one green eye.* **Apprentice:** Quickpaw
Hazeclaw – *A tom with a black pelt wi th yellow eyes. Has one white paw.*
Swiftpool – *A tom with a gray tabby pelt and brown eyes.* **Apprentice:** Rushpaw
Stumpcloud – *A she-cat with a white pelt and a brown tail and underbelly and blue eyes.*
Crushmoon – *A tom with a red pelt and gray eyes.*
Graysun – *A tom with a gray pelt and green eyes.* **Apprentice:** Violetpaw
Beestripe – *A tom with a yellow pelt with black stripes resembling a bee, and yellow eyes.*

Apprentices:
Frostpaw – *A she-cat with a gray white pelt and brown eyes.*
Treepaw – *A tom with a brown pelt and yellow eyes.*
Hailpaw – *A she-cat with a white pelt and gray dapples with green eyes.*
Quickpaw – *A tom with a black pelt and brown eyes.*
Rushpaw – *A tom with a yellow pelt and brown toes and green eyes.*
Violetpaw – *A she-cat with a orange pelt and a yellow tip of the tail and brown eyes.*

Queens:
Blackclaw – *A she-cat with a black pelt and white paws and blue eyes. Mother to Cowkit (a tom with a black and white pelt with brown eyes),*

and Hushkit (a she-kit with a gray brown pelt and yellow eyes).

Elders:
Orangepelt – *A tom with an orange pelt and brown eyes. Missing a front paw, so had to retire early.*
Goatwind – *A she-cat with a light tan pelt and blue eyes.*
Jumpfoot – *A tom with a gray pelt and yellow eyes.*

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Riverclan

Leader:
Vinestar – *A tom with a mud brown pelt and blue eyes.*

Deputy:
Fishpelt – *A tom with a silky gray-black pelt and green eyes.*

Medicine Cat:
Oliveclaw – *A tom with a white pelt and orange legs and yellow eyes.*
Apprentice: Pinepaw

Warriors:
Boldclaw – *A tom with a white pelt and dark green eyes.*
Mistdapple – *A she-cat with a black pelt with white dapples and yellow eyes.* **Apprentice:** Stonepaw
Guppymouth – *A tom with a black pelt with a ring of yellow around his neck and blue eyes.*
Scratchnose – *A she-cat with a ginger pelt and blue eyes and a huge scar on her nose.*
Rustpelt – *A tom with a rust colored pelt and blue eyes.*
Skyheart – *A she-cat with a tabby brown pelt and green eyes and white paws.*
Rustleleaf – *A she-cat with a smokey gray pelt and yellow eyes.*
Silkpelt – *A she-cat with a silky black pelt and blue eyes.*
Emeraldscar – *A she-cat with a yellow pelt and emerald green eyes.*
Apprentice: Waterpaw
Jutnut – *A tom with a tan pelt, in the back is fading to black and brown eyes, and a jutting canine tooth.*
Articpelt – *A beautiful she-cat with a gorgeous white pelt and ice blue eyes.* **Apprentice:** Strikepaw

Fallowfeather – *A she-cat with a ginger pelt and blue eyes.*
Foxpelt – *A tom with a fox red pelt and white-tipped tail and brown eyes.*
Poppyseed – *A she-cat with a yellow pelt with white speckles and white legs and blue eyes.* **Apprentice:** Turtlepaw

Apprentices:
Stonepaw – *A tom with a stone gray pelt and green eyes.*
Waterpaw – *A she-cat with a yellow tan pelt and blue eyes.*
Strikepaw – *A tom with a blue gray pelt and yellow eyes and extra sharp claws.*
Turtlepaw – *A she-cat with a tortoiseshell pelt and blue eyes.*

Queens:
Sweettooth – *A she-cat with a white pelt and brown face and blue eyes. Mother to Darkkit (a black tom with yellow eyes) and Brushkit (a she-kit with a cream pelt and brown eyes).*
Wishheart – *A she-cat with a brown pelt and blue eyes. Mother to Dreamkit (a she-cat with a brown pelt with a black tail and face and green eyes) and Fishkit (a light gray tom with black spots and blue eyes and i s deaf.)*

Elders:
Stiffleg – *A cranky to m with a blue gray pelt and green eyes. One back leg is forever stuck in a stiff, straight position because the knee won't bend anymore.*

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Shadowclan

Leader:
Waspstar – *A bulky she-cat with a black brownish pelt and yellow eyes.*

Deputy:
Sharpeye – *A tom with light gray pelt and green eyes and very keen eyes.*

Medicine Cat:
Fawnstripe – *A she-cat with a fawn pelt and a white stripe across her haunches and green eyes.* **Apprentice:** Juniperpaw

Warriors:
Silverfur – *A she-cat with a silver pelt and blue eyes.*
Bloodtail – *A tom with a pinkish gray pelt and weird genetically inherited blood red eyes.* **Apprentice:** Purrpaw
Yarrowpetal – *A she-cat with a yellow pelt and blue gray eyes.*
Burrpelt – *A tom with a brown very curly pelt and blue eyes.*
Curlyfur – *A chubby she-cat with a wavy black pelt and yellow eyes.*
Apprentice: Burnpaw

Apprentices:
Purrpaw – *A she-cat with a gray tabby pelt and blue eyes.*
Burnpaw – *A tom with a ginger pelt and hazel eyes.*

Queens:
None

Elders:
Shiverpelt – *A very old tom with a light gray pelt and brown eyes.*
Reedwing – *A tom with a yellow tabby pelt and white legs and blue eyes.*
Blizzardclaw – *A she-cat with a amber pelt and fawn eyes. Had to retire early due to a leg injury.*

As you can see, ShadowClan is struggling! But anyway, this is the Alliances, and yeah. And I want to thank Acedraws13 for making the cover to this book!!! So hope you enjoy my book!!!

Prologue

The she-cat's gray fur rippled in the chilly night wind. She bowed her head, gently placing the bundle on the ground.

Hurry up! She thought. **It's too cold for us!**

All of a sudden, the bushes rustled behind her. She turned, half with hope, and half with fear.

"I'm here," a voice whispered. A tom. He padded up to her and nuzzled the she-cat's muzzle.

"Good." She mumbled. "It's too cold for her. She needs warmth. Did you find a cat to take her?"

The tom nodded. "I did. WindClan will take care of her." He reached for the bundle of fur, and it squeaked in protest. The she-cat's heart broke as she heard the pitiful meow, and she knew that she'd never hear it again.

"Are you sure there's no other way?" She asked, pleading. She wanted to stay with the kit forever.

The tom shook his head. "Neither of us will join each other's clan. And we can't abandon our clans, we're too loyal. I'm sorry."

The she-cat hung her head in sadness. "At least let me tell her goodbye."

The tom nodded. "Hurry now. It's almost sunrise, and we need to get back to our clans."

She stepped to the kit and nuzzled her tiny muzzle. She made a noise, like a rumbling purr, and once again, the she-cat's heart broke.

"Take care, little Horsekit." The she-cat croaked. "I'll always love you, even if others don't. Stay true to the warrior code, your clan,

and mostly, yourself. I know WindClan will take care of you, even if my clan won't. I hope we will meet again, not in battle, but in friendship." She licked her tiny head. "Take care, my daughter."

Horsekit squeaked and her little paws fumbled for her mother's face. They made contact, and the she-cat giggled. "My little fighter."

She stepped back, and the tom twined his tail with hers. "I love you, my darling."

The she-cat felt tears fall down her face. "I will always love you, Thrushclaw." She licked him once more, and then she started out of the clearing and back into the darkness of night.

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Who is that? At this time of night? Creamleaf thought. She saw a shadow come into the camp entrance with something in its mouth. **Oh. Thrushclaw.** She confirmed by the tom's scent. **What does he have in his mouth?**

Thrushclaw padded into the Nursery. Creamleaf crept behind, her cream pelt threatening to give her away. She hid behind the Nursery wall and listened to Thrushclaw.

"This is her. Thanks for taking her, Cinderstripe. No one must ever know who her real mother is." Thrushclaw said in a hushed voice, putting the bundle down by the nursing queen. Her kits had come early that morning; Creamleaf had helped with the birth.

Creamleaf stifled a gasp. **Whose kit is that?**

Cinderstripe nodded. "You're welcome. Everyone will think that I had another kit. It's perfect." She looked at the kit, who had found her way to Cinderstripe's belly, and suckled with the other two kits.

"Thank you." Thrushclaw meowed. "I'm glad you can accept that I love you and her both equally. I've fathered two litters, but this one will always be the one in my life. No one will ever know that Horsekit is half-clan."

Creamleaf turned and ran away silently. **A half-clan kit?** She

wondered. **What else could Thrushclaw be hiding?** Her eyes widened, then narrowed. **I must never tell anyone what I've found out tonight. It will always remain a secret.**

Chapter 1

"**Horsekit**, come plaaaaayyyy," whined a voice.

The orange and white kit opened her eyes that were heavy with sleep. She yawned, stretched and stood up. "Hold on a second, Redkit, I just woke up!" Horsekit sounded annoyed, but then her words turned into a laugh.

Redkit grinned and pounced on Horsekit. She barred her teeth and practiced fighting for when she was going to be a warrior. And then Redkit accidentally bumped into their brother, Grindkit, who was sleeping peacefully. Until Redkit messed it up.

"Redkit, *stttoooppp!*" A lazy Grindkit moaned, eyes full of sleep. He rubbed his eyes and started to nurse from their sleeping mother, Cinderstripe. She woke up instantly.

"Good morning, my kits. Did you dream of mice and squirrels?" Cinderstripe asked sweetly. She asked the same question every morning.

"Yes," said Grindkit, Redkit, and Horsekit in unison. It was the routine word.

"Until Redkit woke me up!" Huffed Grindkit, trying to act mad to get Cinderstripe's love.

She looked dismayed. "Redkit, say you're sorry." She gazed at her kit with fiery eyes.

"Ugh, *I'm sorry, Grindkit."* He rolled his eyes and apologized. Grindkit nodded with satisfaction. Horsekit giggled. But a look from Cinderstripe shushed her immediately.

"Now, come eat, my little ones." Cinderstripe instructed, using her tail to drag Redkit and Horsekit into her belly to nurse.

After they nursed, Horsekit's eyes were heavy. She blinked slowly a

few times then curled up next to her mother and siblings and fell asleep.

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A few hours later, Horsekit awoke to the sound of Stormstar calling the clan for the Gathering. She snuck out of the den to listen.

"Frogclaw, Snakepaw, Acornpaw, Thrushclaw, Birdtail, Hawktalon, Eagleeye, Amberpaw, Hazelpelt, Cherrymoon, and Crowpelt, please come to the camp entrance. You are going to the Gathering," Stormstar announced in his loud, clear voice. He jumped off the Big Rock and padded in front of group of cats awaiting to go to the Gathering.

Horsekit was so jealous. She couldn't *wait* until she was a warrior! Or even an apprentice, because Snakepaw, Amberpaw, and Acornpaw got to go. But she was just a kit, but very soon, she would get a mentor and get to go to the Gathering with all the other big warriors.

"Horsekit!" Called a voice from inside the Nursery. Horsekit quickly ducked inside.

"Come play with me!" Yelled Redkit, crouching, ready to spring at his sister. For once, Grindkit was ready to play too. Horsekit grinned, excited her lazy brother also wanted to play.

They began to play a game they called *Fox.* One kit was a 'Fox' while the others hid around the Nursery. The 'Fox' would then find the other kits and pretend to smell them out until they were all found. The last one found got to be the 'Fox' next.

As you can tell, Horsekit made it up.

Redkit was the 'Fox' first. He gave his littermates time to hide, but then he found Grindkit. Soon he found Horsekit as well. Horsekit was the new 'Fox'.

They played that game until the cats returned from the Gathering. Stormstar looked aggravated as he went into his den. Horsekit tilted her head and wondered why.

The kits nursed again and soon fell asleep and couldn't wait for morning so they could it all again.

Chapter 2

The next morning, Horsekit opened her eyes to someone jostling her.

"Horsekit, Horsekit!" Hissed a voice. The jostling continued harder. Horsekit opened her eyes. "*Wwwwhhhhaaatttt??"* She growled. She glared at Redkit, who was jostling her.

"Grindkit and I were playing 'Mossball' and Grindkit knocked the ball over the camp wall. We need to go get it. Will you come?" Redkit whispered harshly. Behind him, Grindkit pipped up, "Sorry!"

"Ugh, okay. Let's go." Horsekit meowed, arching her back in a stretch. "Grindkit, nice aim," She started out the Nursery.

"Well, I *tried* to aim!" Grindkit tried to defend himself, dismayed.

Horsekit snickered.

"Hey, look! I found a hole in the wall!" Redkit hissed loudly. Horsekit and Grindkit quickly ran to Redkit.

As he said, there was a small hole in the gorge wall.

"Yeah, it's in the wall protecting the gorge," Horsekit confirmed.

Horsekit squeezed her tiny body into the hole, and after a little bit of pushing, she got through to the other side. Soon, Grindkit and Redkit got through too.

This was the kits' first time out of the camp. It was so big and scary. Horsekit started staring at the huge trees and the big leaves and the noises in the night...

"Found it!"

"Good job, Redkit!" Grindkit congratulated his brother on finding

the mossball as the two padded to their sister.

"Well, we can go back in the camp now–" Grindkit began worriedly.

"Wanna explore?" Redkit interrupted. "I mean, this *is* our *only* chance out of the camp until we're apprentices, so..." He looked excited.

"Sure," Horsekit shrugged. Grindkit hissed in disappointment. He was crouching down in hate of the idea.

The kits started to walk away from the camp, in awe. It was so *big!* It was so much bigger than the camp! There was no *way* that clans could get into fights over territory if the forest was *this* big!

"So, what do you want your warrior's name to be?" Asked Grindkit, spoiling the silence.

"I want mine to be Redtooth, because my teeth would be red in my enemy's blood," Hissed Redkit, baring his teeth. The other kits took a step away from him in fear.

"Okkkaayyy. I want mine to be Horsepelt, because it just sounds good." Horsekit nodded in approval.

"Mine will be Grindclaw, because every night, I will *grind* my *claws* from my enemy's... bones!" Grindkit yelled, happily. He sprung on Horsekit, who squealed in delight. The three kits got into a tussle and laughed.

They soon stopped as they heard an owl. They got scared and Grindkit said it for all of them, "I wanna go home!"

"Okay, um, let's go now," Redkit actually said. And he was the brave one! The kits agreed and began the long trek back to camp.

Suddenly, there was a low growl. The kits turned around, frightened. It happened again.
Their fur started to bristle up in fear.

And then it jumped out of the bushes onto Redkit. **Oh no...** thought

Horsekit.

Fox.

Chapter 3

It was chaos.

"RUN!!!" Grindkit screeched. The kits started to scramble, except Redkit, because the fox was on top of him. Horsekit realized she needed to help him.

"Go get help!" She yowled at Grindkit. He nodded and sprinted back to camp. Horsekit now focused on her brother and the fox.

She scratched at the fox's head and face. It growled and got off Redkit, who was bleeding heavily. The fox came after Horsekit instead.

Horsekit began to run. Luckily, she was part of WindClan, and WindClan cats could run very fast across the moor. They had a little bit of forest in their territory, and they were in it right now, so she couldn't sprint across because of the trees, so the fox caught up quickly.

Horsekit took a brave move and swung around to face the fox. The fox tried to stop himself, but his huge body kept moving. He slammed into Horsekit, knocking the breath out of her. She landed on her back, and the fox flipped over her tiny frame, and landed behind her. The fox scrambled up to her and started tearing at her throat. Horsekit could feel blood gurgling in her throat when she tried to breathe.

She scratched the fox multiple times in the face. It growled, teeth baring. It suddenly reached for her front leg and started ripping it off.

Horsekit screamed in agony and pain.

She got up again and started running again in the other direction. She was getting tired, she couldn't keep this up for much longer. And her leg hurt very, *very* bad.

She was about to lose all hope and just stop running, when she heard loud yowls. She turned to see the deputy, Crowpelt, and her group of cats behind her. The kits were saved!

All the cats, including their mother and Grindkit, defeated the fox quickly. Soon it ran away, and everyone was relieved. Horsekit collapsed from weakness and relief. She couldn't feel her leg anymore. Her throat hurt, too.

"Oh, Redkit!" Yowled a voice. Cinderstripe ran to her son and began to sob. Horsekit limped over.

"It's okay, Cinderstripe," Horsekit rasped. It was surprisingly hard to speak.

"He's *dying!!!* It's not okay!!..." She cried, burying her face in his fur.

Creamleaf, the medicine cat, ran over. She looked over Redkit, and turned to Cinderstripe. Creamleaf sadly shook her head and said something in a hushed voice. Cinderstripe wailed and cried very loudly. She fell on top of the dying Redkit.

"Sister..." breathed Redkit. You could see how he was struggling. "I love you so much. I'm sorry I have to leave... leave you early, but... it's my time... and it's my destiny..." His voice was trailing off, and his eyes were closing. Horsekit gulped to hold in the tears. Suddenly his eyes widened and they were white. "Remember: *You will have some challenges in life, but you can get over them with your actions as your voice..."* Redkit's eyes closed for the last time as he smiled and he drifted off to StarClan.

"NOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!" Wailed Cinderstripe and Horsekit. Grindkit simply bowed his head.

Over the grief and confusion of Redkit's last words, Horsekit slowly blacked out from the pain in her leg and agony.

Chapter 4

The next day, Horsekit awoke, leg throbbing, in the medicine den. Her throat was hurting, but she had herbs on them to ease the pain. She looked at her leg. It was badly scratched. It was ruined.

"Ahh, you're awake!" Creamleaf's voice was heard in Horsekit's head. She turned to see the medicine cat tending to herbs in the corner.

Horsekit opened her mouth to ask what happened, but when she tried to talk, no sound came out. She tried again. Nothing. She began to panic. Horsekit clawed at her throat, ripping off the herbs.

"Woah, woah! Horsekit, it's okay!" Creamleaf soothed, laying her tail on the scared kit. "Horsekit, I'm afraid to tell you this, but–"

"Every cat who is old enough to catch their own prey, please come in the center of camp for a Clan meeting!" Stormstar's booming voice interrupted Creamleaf. Horsekit listened.

"Last night," Began Stormstar sadly, "there was a terrible fight with a fox. Poor Redkit was sadly killed, and Horsekit was wounded, tearing apart one leg, and is now mute. She is..."

Horsekit looked questionably at Creamleaf.

"Oh, that's what I was going to tell you... Mute means, well, you, ugh, you can't talk anymore. Ever. Never again. I'm so sorry, Horsekit..." Creamleaf found it very hard to break the life changing news to the kit. "I also do not think your leg will be salvageable. We have to take it off. You're only going to have three legs soon..."

Horsekit opened her mouth in a wail. But nothing happened. She began to cry, with no sound. Her life was over. How could a mute and three-legged kit become a warrior now?

Creamleaf opened her mouth to say something, but closed it in

thought.

Horsekit cried. Silently.

She heard someone enter the medicine den.

"Hello, Horsekit," quivered a shaky voice. Grindkit was coming to visit her!

Horsekit wiped her tears to say hello to her brother, but failed. She looked at her paws. A tear slipped out.

"Hey, it's okay." Grindkit soothed, licking her cheek. "I still love you, no matter what. You'll always be my sister. I also want to thank you for trying to get the mossball back, which cost my brother's life..." Grindkit got a distant look in his eyes. He shook his head. "Anyway, I bet Stormstar will be very proud of a mute warrior!" He smiled at her, then it faded. "You're still becoming a warrior, right?.."

Horsekit shrugged.

"Oh... well I hope you do, because we could train together!" Grindkit cheered up with a sad smile. "I'm going to help Gorgekit build a moss castle, so I hope you feel better, sis," He turned quickly and sprinted out the medicine den. Always so edgy.

Horsekit weakly smiled, but
Grindkit already left before he saw it.

"Please, eat these."

She turned to see Creamleaf holding a yellow herb out to her. "Windhushers. We medicine cats just figured out what they do: they make you fall asleep and your body goes numb, so we can, ugh, you know, take off your leg."

Horsekit ate them. She instantly knew how they figured it out. From the top of her toes, she couldn't feel a thing. The numbness crept up her body like a cool wind. Soon she couldn't move, or feel, her face. Then, she blacked out.

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Horsekit opened her eyes groggily. She groaned silently. Creamleaf was standing above her.

"H-how do you feel?" She asked nervously. Horsekit noticed her claws were stained red. From what? Blood, maybe. Horsekit's blood...

Horsekit blinked slowly.

"Well, um, take a look at your leg..."

She glanced down. She gagged. It was a bloody nub where her leg was supposed to be. Horsekit stared in horror. She could barely breathe; her breath was coming in short, gulping gasps. She cried.

"Okay, so, um, yeah, you're going to have to stay in here for a while, and no walking!" Creamleaf scolded, then turned around to leave the medicine den. "If you still are able to," she muttered quietly, but Horsekit heard.

Cinderstripe appeared in the den and smiled sweetly. Horsekit was prepared for loving and encouragement. What she received was not what she expected.

Cinderstripe's smile turned into a disgusted frown. "Worthless piece of fox-dung. Grindkit's now my favorite, even though he *did* kill your brother. I wish you were never born. You embarrass me, kit. I come from a line of worthy warriors. And you now broke that. Thanks for nothing." She sharply turned and strutted out, tail high.

Horsekit was shocked.

Okay, so next to Grindkit, that's the second person that didn't love her anymore. Great.

Chapter 5

"**Good** morning, Horsekit!" Yowled a cheerful voice. It was three days after the incident with Grindkit and Cinderstripe, and Horsekit was trying to walk. All she accomplished was four steps. At the most.

"You look great today!" Said the voice again. Horsekit rolled her eyes.

Horsekit smiled and waved her tail in a fake greeting. Creamleaf looked satisfied.

Creamleaf grinned happily. "I've got news!" She yelled, hardly able to contain her enthusiasm.

Horsekit shrugged with a questioning look. That was real. She really wanted to know.

"You'll be able to go back to the Nursery tomorrow!" Creamleaf exclaimed. She was waiting for a happy response.

Horsekit smiled but then frowned. Everyone would think she was weird and bully her. She'd be *too different.*

Creamleaf realized. "Oh, Horsekit, no one is going to think you're incapable of doing anything! You're still the same kit, just... ugh... yeah..." she smiled weakly.

Horsekit did not believe her.
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The next day, Horsekit was nervous to move back to the Nursery.

"Okay, lemme check you out to see if you're ready to go back." Creamleaf rushed in the den, busy with other cats outside the den because there was a border skirmish with ShadowClan a few moments ago. She was busy with injuries. No major ones though.

Creamleaf inspected Horsekit, using her tail to feel wounds in her fur. She also felt her throat. She sighed. Creamleaf looked at Horsekit pleadingly. "C-can you *try* to speak? Please?" She looked desperate.

Horsekit swallowed. She opened her mouth and tried to speak. Nothing. She tried very hard. Still nothing. Creamleaf sighed again.

"It's just because I've never had anything like this before. I've never actually failed a patient before either." Creamleaf looked at her paws, embarrassed. Horsekit remembered stories about the medicine cat's old mentor, Petalpelt. Petalpelt never lost a client, except that one time when the old warrior Barkheart got into a very bad fight with a dog. Cats could see his entrails. He died a few hours after he got back to camp. Petalpelt was depressed, and was never herself again. She actually died from the guilt of losing a life. Creamleaf did not want to dishonor Petalpelt's name and fail to save a cat. So she devoted all her time to learning all the herbs and remedies.

"I don't want to fail you."

Horsekit was so shocked that Creamleaf, the medicine cat who had to take cat of every cat in the clan, actually *cared* about Horsekit so much, that she didn't want her to be like that forever.

"You also need to learn to walk better. Because you're walking, by yourself, to the Nursery. No help." Creamleaf said plainly, over the little sadness note.

Horsekit's mouth widened in disbelief. She couldn't do that! She tried! Multiple times! Horsekit shook her head ferociously.

Creamleaf nodded back. "Yes you can,"

Horsekit sighed. She wasn't going to win. She was going to have to walk. She pushed herself up, and moved her front foot forward. Her legs trembled, but she took a step. She gritted her teeth, and moved her back legs after her front leg. She was walking!

Horsekit took five steps. Six. Seven... then she crumbled. She

sulked. She couldn't...

"Get up."

Horsekit turned to see Stormstar in the den, watching the kit with Creamleaf. He had no expression on his face. He looked closely.

This is it! She thought. Her heart skipped a beat. **He's looking to see if I can walk to become a warrior apprentice!** Horsekit got up again. She took a few wobbly steps and made it to the den entrance. She sighed with relief as she saw Stormstar nod with approval as he turned to leave the den. She felt her heart swell with pride.

"Good job, Horsekit!" Creamleaf praised, with a look of delight on her face. "Now, go outside."

Horsekit gulped. She stood up and stumbled outside into the open. Cats stopped what they were doing, and watched her. Everyone was staring, including her mother. She looked with curiosity.

Horsekit didn't want to look like a fool in front of the whole clan, so she walked into the Nursery. Every time she would stumble and almost fall, everyone would either gasp, or hold their breath. Soon she entered the Nursery, and the clan smiled, impressed. Even her mother.

When she walked in the Nursery, the cats went back to their business. Horsekit drew in a breath as she saw the other kits and queens look at her like there was a dog behind her. The other queens ushered their kits into their bellies, and looked away. Horsekit knew that they didn't like her now. She wondered if they ever liked her in the beginning.

Chapter 6

The next day, Horsekit was practicing walking outside the Nursery, when Cinderstripe came up to her.

Horsekit smiled weakly, flinching a little. She was ready for the harsh words.

"I'm sorry." Cinderstripe looked ashamed. Horsekit was surprised. "I didn't mean those words I said to you in the medicine den. I was just mad from grief of losing Redkit and you getting injured pretty bad. I'm really sorry, Horsekit. Please forgive me. I need my baby back." She looked very sincere and was on the verge of crying.

Horsekit was touched, but she didn't really believe her. She cocked her head in a question, and her face showed disbelief.

Cinderstripe still tried to apologize. "I'm really sorry, and I would never actually say that, and if I did, I wouldn't mean that. Please, I'm sorry, Horsekit!"

Horsekit believed.

She smiled and nuzzled her mother in the cheek. She nodded happily. Cinderstripe cried with joy. She licked her kit in the head. "By the way, you're apprentice ceremony is in a few days!"

Horsekit stopped, with a blank face. She was excited, but nervous. Her mother saw that.

"It's okay to be nervous. But get excited! Soon you'll be a warrior like your mother." Cinderstripe giggled and pumped out her chest. Horsekit tried to laugh, but there was no sound, but right now that didn't matter. Her mother smiled warmly, then frowned. "I feel very bad for you, my sweet kit. You didn't deserve this. Neither did Grindkit or Redkit. I'm so very sorry."

Horsekit looked at her and mouthed, "I know. It's okay," Last night, Horsekit thought of a new way of communicating with others: mouthing words. If she said them very slowly, and used her tail, she might be able to communicate. She tried it with her mother.

Her mother looked taken aback. "Are you trying to talk without words? Like mouthing them?"

Horsekit nodded.

"It'll work. We just need to practice, and let every cat in the clan know that that's how you'll talk to them. I'll go tell Stormstar right now." Cinderstripe smiled and headed out over to the leader's den. Horsekit waved her tail.

She went back to walking. She was actually improving. Horsekit was proud; today was the first day of reaching thirty six steps! She was very proud.

A cat came up to her. Horsekit sighed; she knew who it was. She turned sharply to Cavekit and and smiled extremely wide so he could see her disapproval. He smirked.

"Hey, Horsekit." He smiled back unpleasantly. Then, he glowered at her. "I said hey!" He showed his teeth, then he frowned in a sympathetic pout, that was obviously fake. "Oh I'm sorry. *Cat got your tongue?*" He laughed menacingly. Horsekit looked at her paws, extremely embarrassed. She could feel her face getting hot and tears welled up.

"Hey, be quiet fox-dung!" Yowled a voice. Horsekit looked up, sniffing. **Grindkit?** She thought.

Nope. It was not his orange pelt. It was a white pelt with brown spots. **Is that... Whirlkit?**

The slightly younger kit was standing up, not at all ashamed of his actions. His claws were unsheathed. His brown eyes were narrowed, as if daring Cavekit to say another word.

Cavekit was more stupid than he looked. "What are *you* going to do about it?" His loud tone voiced a challenge.

Then Whirlkit pounced.

"H-hey!" Cavekit yelled as the kit slammed into his body, knocking the breath of of him. Whirlkit's claws were unsheathed as he tore at the other kit's fur. Cavekit tried to fight back, but Whirlkit surprised him, so he couldn't get the advantage of even one slash back. Finally, Crowpelt heard the commotion and came up.

"Woah, woah!" She interrupted, coming between the bristling kits. "Why are you fighting?" She turned to Whirlkit and Cavekit.

"He started it!" Whined Cavekit to Crowpelt.

"Yeah, probably from something *you* did. Am I right?" She glared at Cavekit. He nodded, ashamed. She sighed in resentment. "I feel sorry for the warrior who has you as an apprentice." She mumbled to herself. Horsekit caught it. She giggled silently.

Crowpelt looked at them. "I thought you both knew how to act. I was wrong. Now, go clean out the Elder's den. That is your punishment." She flicked her tail in the direction of the retired warriors sleeping place.

Cavekit groaned in complaint. If Whirlkit felt annoyed at cleaning it too, he hid it well. He walked over to Horsekit as Cavekit trudged to the Elder's den.

"I'm sorry you had to see that, Horsekit, but me and you both knew that he deserved that. I hate bullies!" He smiled awkwardly. "Well I've got to go help my new enemy now. I'll see you later, okay?" He smiled again and left. When he was a few fox-lengths away, he turned around and meowed, "By the way, you're welcome. Even if you can't say thank you, I know you mean to." He looked at her, and she looked at him. A new friendship was growing, even if they knew it or not.

Chapter 7

"**Let** every cat old enough to catch their own prey, come to the center of camp for a clan meeting!" Stormstar's voice boomed across the camp.

Horsekit yawned. Grindkit was still asleep beside her, trembling. **He's probably having another dream about Redkit.** She thought. He had those a lot lately. Horsekit felt sorry for him.

Cinderstripe squealed. "It's your apprentice ceremony! You have to look nice; Horsekit, come here!" Grindkit started. He gasped. "Warrior ceremony...?"

"No! Your *apprentice* ceremony! Come on!" Cinderstripe exclaimed, exclaimed, waking up the remaining queens that were not awake. Grindkit stumbled over. She began to lick him after she finished Horsekit.

My apprentice ceremony? I'm going to get a warrior as my mentor, because Stormstar watched me walk and he looked satisfied. But... will I get a warrior as a mentor?... She thought nervously. Cinderstripe finished fixing up Grindkit, and the three walked into the center of camp, and crowded around the Big Rock. Her heart was thumping in her chest. It was loud.

"Grindkit and Horsekit please step forward." Stormstar commanded, and the kits feebly stepped forward. "After six moons in the Nursery, Grindkit and Horsekit are ready to become apprentices. They went through a tragic accident that sadly killed their brother, Redkit, who would have been a great warrior." Stormstar cleared his throat. "Now, Grindkit, do you promise to uphold the warrior code for as long as you live?"

Grindkit trembled. "I do,"

"Then, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Grindpaw. Your mentor will be Hawktalon. I know Hawktalon will

share all he knows about the warrior code to you." Grindpaw walked up to touch noses with Hawktalon, who looked excited. This was his first apprentice. Grindpaw looked happy.

"Horsekit, do you promise to uphold the warrior code for as long as you live?" Stormstar had a strange look in his eye.

Horsekit took a deep breath. She opened her mouth. **Oh no... I can't say 'I do'!** She looked around for help and saw Whirlkit in the Nursery entrance, signaling for her to nod. Horsekit turned to Stormstar and nodded once. He smiled.

"Then, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Horsepaw. Your mentor will be Creamleaf. I know that she will share all she knows about healing her clan to you." Stormstar had no expression on his face.

Horsekit gasped. **Creamleaf?! I thought I was getting a warrior mentor! No...!**

"What?!" Thrushclaw's squeaky voice yelled out. "My daughter is perfectly capable of becoming a warrior! I've heard of other cats becoming warriors even if they have a disability! Why won't you even let her try? Are you scared that she'll make us look weak?" He'd challenged the leader.

Stormstar glared at Thrushclaw. "I am *not* scared, but I just don't think she'll have a chance–"

"*You don't think she'll have a chance?"* Thrushclaw breathed. He was about to blow a fuse. His claws were unsheathed and Horsepaw was scared. "I didn't think *you* had a chance as leader, but look at you now! You're doing pretty good! It's not fair! And I'm speaking for Horsepaw as well. Horsepaw, do you want to be a warrior or medicine cat? Point your tail at Creamleaf or Frogclaw to tell us." Frogclaw stepped forward near Creamleaf.

Horsepaw sucked in a breath. This was it. *She* could choose, not anyone else! But which would she choose? A medicine cat helps her clan and is guaranteed to not get injured in battle, but you could never have a mate or kits. On the other paw, a warrior, will get

injured in battle but will also help her clan. Also, they could have lots of other friends who knew how to help. Most of all, they could have a family...

Horsepaw took a deep breath, and pointed her tail at Frogclaw.

Stormstar watched her closely. Horsepaw could see the rage in his eyes, but he hid it well by taking a deep breath.

"Well, the kit has spoken. I understand her wishes. But she still is going to be Creamleaf's apprentice. If she can be a medicine cat apprentice *and* practice being a warrior, she can be a warrior. But she has one moon to practice both ranks. If she passes *both* of the tests, she can be a warrior. If not... she's a medicine cat forever. Is that a deal?" Stormstar stared at Horsepaw. She nodded quickly. How did things get so dark, so fast?

Stormstar nodded back, and turned away. "She can't do it..." he mumbled to himself. Horsepaw sighed. He was right. She couldn't do it... with that kind of attitude!

Horsepaw locked her jaw. She was determined to show her stubborn leader that she could do both in a full moon.

Chapter 8

Training began as soon as the sun was seen over the horizon. Horsepaw rubbed her eyes after a paw shook her.

"Get up, Horsepaw. Medicine cat training, remember?" Creamleaf's voice rang in the silence. "Then, at noon, you and Bounceheart begin warrior training. You've got a busy day, so get some food into you and come to the medicine den."

Horsepaw rolled over, eyes closing.

Suddenly a paw cuffed her ears. She glared at Creamleaf, offended, instantly waking up.

"That's what you get." Creamleaf turned her nose up in the air, strutted out the apprentices' den, tail high.

Ears ringing, Horsepaw trudged to the fresh kill pile. She picked a plump mouse out, and sat down near the Nursery. She ate silently. Suddenly a figure sat down next to her.

"Hey, Horsepaw. I get apprenticed today! That's cool, right, because our moms had us a day apart and we're like really close in age so... oh." Whirlkit fumbled with his words, looking embarrassed. He looked at his paws, realizing he was rambling again.

Horsepaw looked at Whirlkit and smiled sweetly. Everyone already knew about Horsepaw's new way of speaking because Stormstar announced it to the clan the other day, so Horsepaw mouthed words to Whirlkit.

"That's so cool!" She mouthed slowly. "I can't wait to train together!"

Whirlkit gleamed. He grinned and strutted towards the Nursery to go play with his brother, Dustkit. Horsepaw watched happily.

Horsepaw finished her mouse, and limped into the medicine den. Herbs were laid out on the floor in front of her.

"Took you long enough. Now, we are going to learn these herbs and what they do. So, this is Goldenrod. Goldenrod helps with healing wounds. You chew it into a poultice and then plaster it on wounds. Next is Horsetail. Horsetail helps with fighting infections and stopping bleeding. Once again, you chew it into a poultice and then put it on the wounds. Okay, now there's this one; Marigold. Marigold helps stop bleeding and fight infections. It also helps with inflammation with stiff joints. Again, you chew it into a poultice and place it on the wounds. Remember, the join was can be used as well. Then there's Mouse Bile. You get it from a mouse, and you dab it on ticks. The ticks fall off, and it's the only solution for them. Especially remember to wash your paws after using it! It will smell, and it will leave a horrible taste in your mouth for days..." Creamleaf explained all of these herbs, and Horsepaw actually listened carefully.

This would help her *when* she was a warrior. She could help her clan who get injured without going all the way back to camp!

"This is great!" She mouthed to Creamleaf. She looked a little confused.

"Um... yeah, what you said." She turned and began to work on something else. Horsepaw sighed inwardly because she knew Creamleaf didn't understand a word she said. She still has to work out the kinks, so it would get better.

Suddenly, there was a commotion outside the medicine den.

"ThunderClan is attacking!"

Chaos began.

Stormstar gathered the cats who would participate in the battle. "... Horsepaw, Deerstrut..."

Horsepaw's breath caught in her throat. Her first battle! She got

chosen! She strutted outside the den and lined up with the other warriors and apprentices who would attack.

Wait... she hadn't done warrior training yet. She had no clue at all how to fight.

"Stormstar!" She mouthed. But of course he didn't hear her because nothing happened. She began to panic. She looked around for a saving grace.

"Let's go!" Stormstar called to the cats. Everyone began to march out the camp. Horsepaw has no choice but to follow. Maybe kit fighting would help...

Suddenly Stormstar glanced back at her with a sly smile. He knew what he was doing. He wanted to see how well she would do with no training.

He wanted her to fail.

And maybe die because of it.

Horsepaw swallowed feebly and raced along with the group as she stared at her fearless leader. He wanted her killed.

ThunderClan soon appeared near the WindClan camp. Horsepaw blinked, and in one second, she was surrounded with tangled bodies and screeching cats. She stood there in shock.

Suddenly, a body knocked her over. She was forced on the ground with a large gray body looming over her.

"I'm having WindClan tonight!" Hissed the ThunderClan she-cat. "And one with three legs!" Her green eyes gleamed with malice. She was ready to kill for her clan. The cat snapped at Horsepaw's neck, but her aim was slightly off. Thankfully.

Horsepaw tried to push her off, but the warrior was too big. She couldn't move. A force suddenly barreled into the cat on top of Horsepaw. Horsepaw was knocked in the air as the weight was

lifted off of her. She flew up in the air, and fell back.

Horsepaw was frightened. Shouldn't she have hit the ground by now? She forced her eyes to open.

Oh no... the cliff!!! Horsepaw thought with a scream that was soundless.

Horsepaw was falling off the cliff in WindClan territory. She was going to die.

Chapter 9

Horsepaw screamed with no sound. She was falling head over paws down the cliff that was formed a few moons earlier from water erosion. Horsepaw shut her eyes tightly to shut out the pain that she was about to inflict.

Suddenly, she slammed into... fur. **What?...** She thought. She opened her eyes. Horsepaw looked around and checked if she was hurt. All her paws looked fine, body looked okay, tail wasn't broken, so she was okay, right? Yeah. She was.

Horsepaw got up of the fur (she was still puzzled about that) and looked where she was. She was in the little gorge thing. **This is a good place for a camp.** She thought. She turned around to stare at the fur that saved her life. It was ginger orange. With a white tipped tail. **Oh, GREAT. A fox!!!** Her breath caught in her throat as she caught a chilling glance at the animal that killed her brother and injured her forever, ruining her life.

Horsepaw felt a stab of anger as she looked at the fox. More than she felt when Creamleaf told her that she could never talk again. She had a sudden impulse to attach the fox. She listened to her instincts, and launched herself at the still fox. She ripped and tore at is orange fur as tears fell down her face. When she was done crying, she stepped back to look at what she had done to the already dead fox.

The fox's body was ripped open in many places, but there was no blood. Probably because it was already dead. Probably died a few days ago or something. Horsepaw was satisfied with her destruction she inflicted on this body.

Now she faced a new problem: getting back up to the fight. She came *down* the cliff*,* so there must be a way *up* it. But how? Horsepaw stared at the fox and predicted it's death. She came to the conclusion that it rolled down the cliff and died on impact. Not a

good way to die.

She began to climb it. It was hard, because she was a missing a leg. She dug her claws into the cliff side and snarled as she hauled her body up the cliff. She repeated the motion.

After what felt like moons, Horsepaw collapsed on the top of the cliff. She couldn't stop her legs from shaking. Her claws were bleeding from the weight that they had to pull up. She panted as she gazed at the battle scene.

Cats were biting, tugging fur, and screeching. All the cats were so bunched together, and moving swiftly, Horsepaw couldn't tell who was in her clan or not!

Horsepaw just jumped in the fight. She picked a skinny light gray tom with green eyes out to fight. Pretend fighting moves rolled through her mind. She chose the hardest move she could think of: Her backflip swipe. It wasn't good at all, but it confused her siblings every time.

Horsepaw swiped at the tom, ad realized that this was a full grown warrior. She had no chance at beating him. He probably knew every move she'd make! But she had to try. She jumped in the air, over the tom's back, and swiped at his eyes. She landed behind him on her paws. She tumbled a bit, losing balance because her front leg wasn't there to help hold her up.

The tom hissed with pain and rubbed his eyes. He faced Horsepaw. One of his eyes was milky white with blood on it. The other was untouched.

"Look what you did, kit! You blinded me! And I can't believe you did that, because you have only three legs, cat!" He spat at her. He was grinding his teeth. His fur was ruffled up, making him look twice his size. "You'll *pay* for that!" He screeched, launching himself at Horsepaw. She gasped silently as he clawed at her pelt. She grimaced as she felt pain on her side. She clawed back, blindly. She heard the tom wince in pain and her claws met their mark. Satisfaction filled her chest, but it didn't last long. The tom jumped

on her back and began to rip at it. She tried to stand up, but the tom was too heavy. She could basically see the smile on his face as he tore at her fur.

Suddenly, the weight was lifted off of her as someone else fought the tom.

"I've got you, Horsepaw!" Thrushclaw's voice called to his daughter. Horsepaw stood up gratefully and began to help her father fight the tom.

After a while of fighting, ThunderClan began to retreat. Soon, they were all gone, with the WindClan cats left to pant and bleed.

"Does anyone have major injuries?" Stormstar's clear voice yelled out to his clan. Everyone looked around, worried.

"Birdtail does!" Scarletnose's voice rang in the silence. "She collapsed a few moments ago. She has a big gash down her side. We need to get her to Creamleaf, quickly! Help me!" A few cats went to help Scarletnose lift her sister off the ground, and tote her back to camp. Deerstrut lifted her on his back, and ran her carefully back to camp.

Horsepaw smiled, but was still worried for Birdtail. She had just fought her first battle, and escaped alive.

Chapter 10

The next day, Horsepaw walked out of Creamleaf's den after visiting Birdtail. She was doing good, Creamleaf had said. Horsepaw could still hear the tremor in her voice, though. All that Horsepaw had learned, didn't really help with Birdtail's injury, except poppy seeds to ease the pain, so Creamleaf has told Horsepaw to stick with warrior training for now.

Horsepaw was padding to meet Bounceheart for warrior training. It was about noon, so it was time for the lesson with the older she-cat.

"Why did you fight in that battle? You knew what was at stake." Barktooth whispered to Honeypelt as they were walking by Horsepaw to go do some hunting. They had become very attached lately.

"The kits aren't bothering me yet. I can manage for a little bit longer. It's okay, so stop..." Honeypelt answered, her voice fading as they passed.

Horsepaw's heart skipped a beat. **That means there's going to be *three* queens, because Cinderstripe moved back to being a warrior after we became apprentices.** She thought. **That's a lot for this greenleaf. And that means a lot of apprentices. We're going to be a big clan!** Her heart swelled with pride that her clan was the biggest!

"Horsepaw, over here!"

Horsepaw turned to a voice. Bounceheart was smiling and waving her tail near the place where apprentices trained, the little area outside of camp. She followed Bounceheart out of camp and into the training area.

"Okay, let's see your hunting crouch." Bounceheart instructed. "Since we worked on this yesterday, you should know it. But it

doesn't have to be perfect, so let's see it!"

Horsepaw crouched down, but she stumbled because of the missing leg. She gained her balance a little and winced at her leg nub stretching. Bounceheart circled by, using her tail to make adjustments at her crouch. Soon she stepped back and gave a small nod.

"Not bad, but could use more work. Now, wanna test it out?" Bounceheart meowed excitedly. She looked eager to show her apprentice how to kill prey.

Horsepaw's eyes glowed. "Like hunting!?" She mouthed. Bounceheart nodded happily. Horsepaw jumped, partly with trying out her crouch, and partly that Bounceheart understood her words.

"Let's go to the meadow to try. I know you might not be able to run as fast, because... ugh..." Bounceheart's eyes trailed down to Horsepaw's missing leg. "But anyway, you probably will still run pretty fast, fast enough to catch a rabbit, I think." She looked awkward.

They began to walk towards the meadow. Soon, they arrived and the smell of rabbits was everywhere.

"There's a lot of prey today. You'll see one in a second and you'll catch it. You know, there's probably one right under our noses!" Bounceheart laughed, but then stopped as she saw that Horsepaw didn't.

Horsepaw was too concerned and focused on hunting to laugh. She inhaled, and caught a scent of a rabbit immediately. It was a few fox-lengths in front of her. She crouched with a smirk and crept forward. She saw its ears up in the grass. She made sure that she was down-wind of the rabbit so it didn't smell her. She held her breath when she was close enough to pounce, and she jumped on the rabbit. Surprised, the rabbit squeaked and ran. Horsepaw was determined to catch it, so she followed it.

Bounceheart bounded after them.

Horsepaw looked her jaw, and ran faster than she thought was possible. She was getting so close...

Until she tripped on a rock.

Horsepaw tumbled head over paws and rolled on the ground. She rolled on *top* of the rabbit, squashing it. It wailed as it was caught under a cat more than half its weight heavier than it. Horsepaw was happy she caught it, but was embarrassed as she made the killing bite after they stopped rolling. She padded proudly back to Bounceheart.

"Well done, Horsepaw!" Bounceheart praised her apprentice. "Definitely not how I would catch a rabbit, but it works! Still, it was just luck that you caught it. If the rabbit was farther in front of you, you would've fell on the rock and ruined your chance to catch it. That means you have to be aware of your surroundings while you're running. But it's okay because we'll work on that too." Bounceheart instructed. "Now, let's get that big rabbit back to camp so we can work on battle training!" She began to walk back to camp. Horsepaw followed, smiling. She had caught we first rabbit! Maybe this was going to work, fitting two rank training into one.

Horsepaw could do it.

Chapter 11

"**Now,** you love your clan very much, right?" Bounceheart prompted once they were back to camp and were in the training area.

Horsepaw nodded vigorously.

"You have to fight against Grindpaw like it's a real battle between ShadowClan, okay? It's just so I can see how much you know so we can work on things." Bounceheart meowed, as Grindpaw and his mentor, Hawktalon, padded up to them.

"Hello, Bounceheart and Horsepaw," Hawktalon said cheerfully. Grindpaw waved his tail at his sister and her mentor. "Are you ready for the face Grindpaw in a fight?" Hawktalon faced Horsepaw. Horsepaw nodded half heartedly. "Remember, claws sheathed!"

"Okay, Grindpaw and Horsepaw, get in the middle and try your hardest. Good luck!" Bounceheart said to the apprentices, as they padded to the middle of the training ground. Horsepaw swallowed nervously. Grindpaw smiled encouragingly.

"Okay, ready, set, GO!" Hawktalon announced.

The apprentices began to fight. Horsepaw leaped on Grindpaw, and landed on his back.

"Ooh!" He gasped as the breath was knocked out of him.

Horsepaw pawed at his shoulders and neck. Suddenly, Grindpaw stood up threw her off. Horsepaw couldn't get her balance to stand up because of her missing leg. Grindpaw jumped on her stomach, making her exhale loudly. Horsepaw tried to swipe at his head and ears, but she only had one leg with claws. It didn't help. Grindpaw smiled triumphantly. "Got you!" He laughed. Horsepaw smiled. "Good job!" She mouthed.

"Okay, you can stop." Bounceheart's voice rang in the silence. The fight was finished.

"Grindpaw, you won this round. But Horsepaw did very good with her disadvantages. We haven't done battle training yet either, so we still have a lot of work. So good job, you guys!" Bounceheart noted. "Hawktalon, you and Grindpaw can go back to whatever y'all were doing before I called you guys. Great practice, Grindpaw. Thanks for coming!" Hawktalon nodded once, and Grindpaw smiled. The two walked back into camp together.

"Alright, now I'll show you some battle moves. We'll start with the belly rake. If you're pinned on the ground on your back, you can try to get either your back paw or front paw to rake your claws down the opponent's belly fur. You'll immediately get control so you can jump up, and attack them. It's really helpful, and it's the first move every apprentice learns. Wanna try out?" Bounceheart spoke very fast, but with authority. She was very descriptive and Horsepaw understood well. Horsepaw nodded.

"Okay, I'll be the one on top. You can be the one on your back on the ground. Use sheathed claws." Bounceheart instructed. She let Horsepaw lay done on her back, and she climbed on top of her. "Now, use your back or front claws to swipe at my stomach. Use whatever leg you can get free. Try it." Horsepaw swiped with her back paws and Bounceheart pretended to fall on the ground. "Ow, your sharp claws ripped my belly!" She had a amused gleam in her eyes. Horsepaw laughed silently. "That's was actually great, Horsepaw!" Bounceheart smiled approvingly. Horsepaw grinned back.

"Go get some fresh-kill. I think we did enough for today. Great practice!" Bounceheart walked back into camp to go join a hunting patrol. Horsepaw followed, but turned to go to the fresh-kill pile. She picked a skinny rabbit and sat down near her the apprentices' den.

"Hey!" Whirlpaw called from across the camp. He was walking into camp with his mentor, Grassfoot. He became an apprentice about a week ago. He was training very well, Grassfoot had said to

Bounceheart.

"Can we share this r-rabbit?" He asked, sitting down next to the other apprentice. His white and brown pelt gleamed in the sun.

"Sure," Horsepaw mouthed happily. She pushed the rabbit in front of them both. He nodded gratefully and began to eat. "How's training going–"

She was interrupted by a heart wrenching wail. The apprentices turned towards the Elder's den.

"Hazelpelt! No!"

Chapter 12

Horsepaw and Whirlpaw stood up quickly. "What's going on?" Gasped Whirlpaw.

"I don't know. Let's go see!" Horsepaw mouthed, with a scared expression on her face. They raced to the Elder's den.

When they walked in, it was full of cats. Horsepaw recognized Creamleaf, Stormstar, Crowpelt, and many more.

"What's wrong?" Horsepaw mouthed to Acornpaw.

He turned to her. "Hazelpelt's hurt real bad. She was shaking uncontrollably and can't breathe. Creamleaf thinks it's time for her to join StarClan." He looked depressed. Hazelpelt was the apprentices' favorite elder. She always told stories to the kits and played with the apprentices.

"I'm so sorry." Horsepaw mouthed back. She knew that she was Acornpaw and Amberpaw's mother's mother. She loved all the apprentices and kits very, very much.

Creamleaf looked up to the crowd of cats. "Hazelpelt has joined StarClan." She waited until the gasps and wails died down. "We'll sit vigil for her." She turned to the hazel colored elder. "May StarClan light your path. May you find good hunting, swift running, and shelter where you sleep. Farewell, good friend." She licked Hazelpelt's shoulder.

A few warriors began to drag her out of the Elder's den and into the center of camp. Stormstar turned to the other cats, after talking with Creamleaf and Honeypelt. "After this sad tragedy, we are receiving new life in the clan. Honeypelt is carrying Barktooth's kits, and has decided to join the Nursery." He smiled as everyone cheered for the new mates. "We will now sit vigil. So if you're sitting vigil for Hazelpelt, get situated. If you are not, please

continue your duties." He dismissed the clan and the cats went to which ever they were going to do. Horsepaw decided to sit vigil for the elder. Whirlpaw did too.

The two apprentices padded out the Elder's den, and sat down near the dead elder's body. They were joined by Acornpaw, Amberpaw, Frogclaw, Raccoonpaw, Creamleaf, and Snakepaw. The cats got comfy for the long night of silence and grief.
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The next day, Horsepaw got up and stretched her limbs. She was lucky she didn't fall asleep, because she heard from warriors gossiping of patrols, that if you fell asleep during a vigil, you would die a few days later.

She got up and padded to the fresh-kill pile, and took a small rabbit to eat. Whirlpaw, of course, joined her. They ate silently, tired from last night's vigil. When they finished, Whirlpaw went to practice battle training with Grassfoot. Horsepaw waved goodbye.

A cat walked up to her. Horsepaw turned to see her mentor. "Come," Bounceheart said gravely. Horsepaw obeyed, scared for what she did wrong.

Bounceheart lead her to the edge of camp. Frogclaw, Raccoonpaw, Eagleeye, and Snakepaw were also there. They all looked grave, too.

Bounceheart then laughed. So did the others. "Don't worry! I was just going to tell you we're joining a border patrol! Did you see the look on your face?" She thought she was hilarious.

"So funny." Horsepaw mouthed sarcastically. "I really thought I was in trouble." She couldn't help the smile, though.

"Okay, let's go." Frogclaw said. He began the long trek to the borders. The others followed. **He'd make a good deputy.** Horsepaw thought. She followed close by Bounceheart.

When they got to the border near the Thunderpath, Frogclaw stopped. He turned. "Bounceheart, Horsepaw, and Snakepaw, patrol

this border. Eagleeye, Raccoonpaw, and I will go to the river border." His cats padded away to patrol the border with RiverClan, while he left the others to patrol the ShadowClan border.

"So, how's training going, Snakepaw?" Asked Bounceheart, while she was marking a tree.

"Well, I think it's going good. That's what Deerstrut says, at least. He said my final assessment isn't too far away!" Snakepaw answered excitedly.

"That's great!" Horsepaw mouthed to him. He glared at her. Then he smiled at Bounceheart.

Horsepaw was taken aback. **What did I do? I guess someone put dirt in his fresh-kill. Maybe he's just having a bad day, so he's taking his anger out on me. But why me?...** Horsepaw thought, confused.

Bounceheart stopped. "You guys finish marking. I'll meet you back here. I'm going to check if there's any fox scent near the old den where we chased out the fox a few sunrises ago. I'll be right back." She bounded off happily.
Don't leave me with him!... Ugh. Horsepaw wished that she could talk right now, or this was about to be awkward.

"I don't like you. You probably know that already. Or not having a voice means you don't have a brain anymore, rabbit-brain!" Snakepaw snarled. "You stole the mentor I wanted, you get *all* the attention just because you're disfigured, and Stormstar likes you the best!" He leaped on Horsepaw.

Horsepaw tried to shriek for help, but no one came. The two cats battled, biting and scratching. They rolled on the Thunderpath. Horsepaw pulled apart.

"Monsters! They're going to hit us!" She mouthed wildly to Snakepaw.

He grinned with malice. "Oh no, they're going to hit *you."* He

pushed her father on the Thunderpath. She scrambled back to the grass. Snakepaw tried again. Horsepaw dodged his shove, and he tumbled forward onto the Thunderpath.

"Ahhh!" He screeched as they heard a monster rumbling down.

"Give me your paw!" Horsepaw mouthed, but sadly, Snakepaw wasn't looking at her. He was staring like a deer in headlights at the monster coming fast.

Horsepaw shut her eyes tightly as she heard a sickening crunch, and the monster's wheels screeching across the acrid black Thunderpath.

Horsepaw opened her eyes to see the fellow apprentice, laying ominously still on the Thunderpath.

Chapter 13

Horsepaw stared at the tan colored apprentice. **Oh, no, no, NO!** She thought wildly. She raced across the Thunderpath, not caring to look for monsters.

Please, StarClan, please tell me he's not dead! Horsepaw gulped as she crouched near his body. **He can't be dead!** She searched wildly for a way to see that he wasn't dead. As her eyes stopped looking for a sign, she heard the sound of cats meowing and whispering in the wind. Horsepaw looked around, startled. There wasn't any cat around, that she could scent. She turned back to Snakepaw and gasped without sound.

Snakepaw was surrounded with sparkles, and the outline of cats. The cats rubbed against him, and his fur stirred in the wind that wasn't there. The cats were starry, and were transparent. She couldn't recognize any of them, because they had no color, except the blue sparkle outline. She looked at their faces, looking for a sign that she knew them. One cat almost made her cry in pain and agony.
Oh, Redkit. I will always love you. Horsepaw stifled a wail. **I will wait for you forever.**

Then she heard a gasp. She suddenly felt movement. Horsepaw stared at Snakepaw with wonder. He was alive!

Horsepaw looked at the mysterious cats, but they were gone. She tasted the air, but there was no trace at the cats that saved Snakepaw's life.

"Wha-what did they do?" Snakepaw whispered in wonder. He had a distant look in his eye, like the sparkles of the cats. "I was dead, but then they brought me back to life..." He was talking to himself in wonder. "I can't see where they went, so I'm going to say thank you to you. Thank you, Horsepaw, for saving my life." Surprisingly, Snakepaw smiled slightly at Horsepaw. She saw that one of his front fangs were missing.

Horsepaw started shaking. "You're welcome," She mouthed. She helped him up, and they stumbled across the Thunderpath.

When they made it to the other side, they collapsed on the ground. They started panting, even though they didn't do very much. Monsters rolled by on the Thunderpath, making the ground rumble and vibrate under them.

"W-What happened?" Bounceheart's whisper was barely heard over the roar of monsters. She padded up to them and stroked Snakepaw carefully with her tail, like he wasn't even there. She licked their faces shakily. She laughed a little in disbelief. "Did he get hit by a monster?"

Horsepaw nodded slowly.

Bounceheart laughed again and shook her head.

"Well, I think that was enough excitement for this border patrol! Let's go back to camp. And Snakepaw needs to get checked out by Creamleaf. I bet Stormstar can't wait to hear this!..." she walked towards camp, and faded out of earshot. Then she turned around sharply, and remembered that Snakepaw was injured, and helped Horsepaw support him on the journey back to camp.
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"**Let** all cats who are old enough to catch their own prey, come to the clan rock for a clan meeting!" Stormstar's voice rang in the camp's silence.

Cats flooded out of their dens and soon the centerof camp was filled with WindClan cats, wondering what the meeting was about.

"As you know, Snakepaw got in an accident involving the Thunderpath." Stormstar began with wonder. "He got struck by on of the awful monsters, instantly dying. But Horsepaw claimes she saw, we think, StarClan cats bringing him back to life. That's the first time we have ever heard of StarClan cats bringing an apprentice back to life." Everyone was silent, except Snakepaw's mother, Sunspots, as she wailed with horror. Her mate, Falconwing, tried to shush her, and lead her to Creamleaf's den.

Stormstar ignored the she-cat, and continued his announcement. "So from now on, watch carefully for any signs of StarClan cats, because they might be telling us a warning, or giving us a prophecy, and also, be careful on the Thunderpath. And lastly, remember to feed the clan as well with the battle training. Keep up the good work, WindClan," And with that, the leader jumped off the Big Rock, and the meeting was dismissed.

Horsepaw turned and padded back to the apprentices' den. She looked at the clouds. **I have a pretty long time to train until my final assessments to prove to Stormstar that I can be a warrior. I better train harder and learn more herbs. I can do this!** Horsepaw smiled, and went to go train with Creamleaf about herbs, since Birdtail was realeased yesterday evening. She padded off, and didn't realize that Whirlpaw's eyes were gazing at her pelt in wonder.

Chapter 14

The next day, Horsepaw awoke at sunrise. She walked sluggishly towards the fresh-kill pile, and sat next to Whirlpaw. **His scent tasted wonderful,** Horsepaw realized. Even though she smelled it every night, because their nests were right next to each other's, today he smelled perfect. **I'm so weird.** She scoffed. **I don't like him like that, do I?** She shuddered. She wasn't ready for this. She was still an apprentice!

"Wanna go hunt?" He asked her unexpectedly. She turned to him, startled.

"Ugh, sure," She mouthed. They got up, and padded towards the camp entrance.

"Hey, Horsepaw!"

Horsepaw turned. Creamleaf was smiling at her. "It's time for medicine cat training! My den's free, so we have plenty of time for work. Hurry up!"

Horsepaw looked apologetically towards Whirlpaw, and raced over to the medicine cat's den.

"Okay, so this is Windhushers, as you know, because I gave them to you when, ugh... yeah. These are cobwebs, used for stopping bleeding. Also, that's juniper berries, which help with bellyache, calming a cat, and coughs, Hey and these are water mint, which also helps with bellyache and hides the scent of death. That's a burdock root, which helps heal rat bites. This is catmint, and it helps cure greencough and whitecough. This is chervil, which helps with kitting and bellyache and infected wounds. Coltsfoot, which is this stuff, helps with cracked pads and breathing. Comfrey roofs help with a lot, which includes broken bones, soothing wounds, retched claws, itching, and inflammation of stiff joints. Dock soothes scratches. This stuff is feverfew and it helps with headaches

and fever. Marigold stops infection. Parsley, which is this, helps with bellyache and stops a Queen from producing milk. Sorrel keeps a cat from getting hungry. Tansy helps with sore throat and coughs. Thyme cures shock. Wild garlic helps with rat bites. Yarrow makes you throw up poisons. Deathberries kill a cat, and Foxglove Seeds paralyze or kill a cat. And I think that's about it." Creamleaf explained. Horsepaw's mind was reeling from all the information she just learned. "Now, go get more cobwebs. Our stock is running low. You can find them underneath logs in the forest. Off you go!" Creamleaf ushered her away from the den, and out the camp. Horsepaw hurried away from the medicine cat's sheathed paw.

"I'm going, I'm going!" She laughed silently. Creamleaf didn't see her mouth move, so she didn't catch the she-cat's hushed laugh. Horsepaw smiled sadly. She longed for the days when the other cats would actually hear her voice. She padded out the camp, and into the forest.

"Wait up, Silentpaw!"

Horsepaw flinched and rolled her eyes. That was Cavepaw's new nickname for Horsepaw. He became an apprentice a few days ago, so he got to spread the torture with all the other apprentices.

She smiled at him unpleasantly. He stalked over to her menacingly. "I heard your training be a warrior and a medicine cat. You should train as an Elder, you'll be great at that!" He laughed, and his yellow fangs gleamed in the sun. Horsepaw winced at his words. She stared into his blue eyes, which were filled with distaste. She curled her lip because of hatred.

She noticed that he began to stare back into her eyes. They stood there a moment, eyes locked, everything silent surrounding them. Then Horsepaw snapped back into reality.

"I– I gotta go... um, bye?" Horsepaw mouthed, padding off quickly without turning back. She felt Cavepaw's eyes burning into her pelt as she left.

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Horsepaw lifted up another log and she gathered the cobwebs. She

grumbled as they got stuck in her pelt. She forced them into her paw, which was covered in the icky cobwebs. She trudged to the next log.

"Hello, sister!" Grindpaw's cheery voice meowed, making her turn. She smiled a genuine smile as his orange pelt came into view. She waved her tail in greeting.

Grindpaw dropped the vole he was carrying. "I was sent on my first hunting mission! I caught only a vole, but as Hawktalon says, 'One piece of prey is better than nothing!'" He tried to imitate the big warrior's deep voice. Horsepaw laughed quietly. "I hope he's pleased with what I caught. Well, I gotta go. Bye, Horsepaw!" He picked up his vole, waved goodbye with his tail, and walked into camp, head and tail held up high. Horsepaw smiled at him.

She picked up the cobwebs that were under the last log, and walked into camp with the pile of cobwebs. Her heart didn't feel heavy anymore after she witnessed how great her brother was doing as a warrior apprentice.

Chapter 15

"**Let** all cats old enough to catch their own prey, gather underneath the Big Rock for a clan meeting!" Stormstar's voice yowled over the camp. Cats flooded out of their dens and gathered around the Big Rock. Horsepaw sat by Whirlpaw, as she saw Snakepaw strut up next to his mentor, Deerstrut, and together they sat underneath the Big Rock.

"Today is the best part of clan life; seeing a young cat become a warrior. Snakepaw, please come forward." Stormstar looked down upon the tan apprentice, who's chest was puffed out with pride. "Deerstrut, is Snakepaw ready to receive his warrior name?"

Deerstrut nodded. "He is, Stormstar."

"Good." Stormstar nodded approvingly, and looked up at the sky. "Warriors of StarClan, look down on this apprentice as he becomes a warrior. He has trained hard to understand the warrior code and to protect his clan." He turned his gaze to the eager apprentice. "Snakepaw, as leader of WindClan, I, Stormstar, give you your warrior name, Snakestrike. I welcome you as a full warrior of WindClan. Congratulations, Snakestrike." Snakestrike rested his muzzle on his leader's shoulder. Then, he turned to the crowd, his eyes shining with pride and gratitude.

"Snakestrike! Snakestrike! Snakestrike!" The clan yowled the new warrior's name, Horsepaw's being one of the loudest, even though he did try to kill her.

Stormstar waited until the noise died down. "Now, as it is a tradition, Snakestrike must sit vigil for the night, and guard the camp alone." He jumped down the rock, as a sign that the meeting was dismissed. He went to talk to the new warrior.

Horsepaw walked by Acornpaw and Amberpaw, and she heard Acornpaw hiss, "Just you wait, that'll be us one day. We'll be the

greatest warriors WindClan has ever seen!" He laughed as his eyes sparkled at his sister. Amberpaw cuffed him on the shoulder, and the two walked off towards the camp entrance to do some hunting.

Whirlpaw turned towards Horsepaw. "I have a bellyache. Can you tell Creamleaf to give me something for it?"

Horsepaw was hurt. "You don't trust me?" She mouthed, heartbroken.

Whirlpaw's eyes widened. "No! I just forgot that you were a medicine cat apprentice, that's all. Here, I'll let *you* fix it, just don't kill me!" His words turned into a giggle. Horsepaw smiled lightly. The two padded into the medicine den.

Creamleaf's back was to them, as she was mixing herbs. She stopped, and turned to them.

"She's going to give me herbs for my bellyache." Whirlpaw answered Creamleaf's question before she even said it.

Creamleaf stood, emotionless, and watched her apprentice.

Horsepaw looked at the line of herbs. She tried to remember which ones could help with bellyache. She almost began to sweat as she looked at the collection of remedies. She held her breath as she chose the small berries. She handed them to Whirlpaw, who had a fake smile on his face. He opened his mouth hesitantly and began to pop the berries in his mouth.

"Wait!" Screeched Creamleaf. She raced over and stole the berries from Whirlpaw. She turned to Horsepaw sharply. "Those were *Deathberries!* You could have *killed* him! Try again. And *don't* try to kill him." She put the berries back.

Horsepaw's face flushed. She looked at Whirlpaw, who appeared to be petrified. Horsepaw reached for more berries. She thought that these were it. She hoped they were it...

Creamleaf nodded approvingly. "Juniper berries. Good idea. You

can eat them, Whirlpaw." Whirlpaw ate them and smiled.

"Thanks, Horsepaw and Creamleaf. I feel better already. I almost died, but hey, you're just learning!" He smiled at Horsepaw as he left the medicine den. She smiled back.

"Well, that proves that you have a lot to learn. You can't make those mistakes when I'm gone. I won't be there to stop you." Creamleaf said softly, almost as soft as a whisper. She looked at her paws.

"Wait, what are you talking about?" Horsepaw mouthed. She was concerned for her mentor.

"Well, Horsepaw, I'm getting old." Creamleaf said plainly. "It's just part of life. I've been the medicine cat of WindClan since Ivystar was leader. I'm going to StarClan soon, so you need to learn as much as you can before the two weeks are over, and before I go." She smiled weakly at Horsepaw. "You're the only apprentice I've taken. You're all WindClan has left to protect them. If you become a warrior, I won't have enough time to fully train an apprentice. Horsepaw, WindClan *needs* you as a medicine cat." Creamleaf looked at Horsepaw pleadingly.

She was right; Creamleaf was getting old. Did Horsepaw really want to give up her dream as a warrior to make sure she didn't let her clan's medicine cat down?

Chapter 16

Horsepaw yawned as the sun cut through the apprentices' den. She opened her eyes sluggishly and blinked the sleep out of them. She got up, careful not to disturb Whirlpaw– who was sleeping next to her, tail over his nose– and padded out the den.

The clearing was empty, except for a few cats who were ready to leave on the dawn patrol. Horsepaw always awoke early to fit in both ranks training. She woke up early to work with Bounceheart this morning, and at sun high she would work with Creamleaf.

Horsepaw picked a small rabbit from the fresh kill pile, and felt a harsh wind stir her fur. She noticed how every day how the hunting patrols were returning with less and less prey. Leaf-fall wasn't too far away.

When she finished her meal, she walked outside of camp, and passed Birdtail who was on guard for the camp. She nodded to warrior and trotted to the training area. Bounceheart was already waiting.

"Good morning, Horsepaw." Bounceheart mewed. She smiled at the apprentice, who sat down on her haunches to listen. " Today, we'll work on more battle skills. This one is the twist and dodge. You have to dodge your attacker's swipes and blows and then suddenly jump over their back and twist. You also have to land quickly and attack them before they realize what's happened. Want to try? I'll be the enemy." Bounceheart crouched down, ready to attack Horsepaw. Horsepaw crouched down as well and narrowed her eyes, determined to get this move right, even with a missing leg.

Bounceheart lashed out at Horsepaw's ear, but she dodged it easily. This happened many more times, and finally, Horsepaw leaped over Bounceheart's back without a warning. She twisted in the air, and landed awkwardly, twisting her front paw. She hissed in pain, and Bounceheart got up to see what happened.

"You just landed wrong. But otherwise, that was great! We'll work on it again when you're better, but you better go see Creamleaf." Bounceheart told her. Horsepaw nodded, and limped off to the medicine den.

She hobbled into the medicine den, and approached her other mentor from behind. Creamleaf was tending to Falconwing's paw.

"Give it a good lick, and come back if it's still hurting by tomorrow." She instructed the young warrior.

"Thanks, Creamleaf. I will!" Falconwing limped out, going to the fresh kill pile.

Horsepaw smiled. Creamleaf stared at her. "What now?"

Horsepaw was slightly taken aback. "I twisted my paw." She mouthed.

Creamleaf was confused. "What?"

Horsepaw inwardly groaned. "I twisted my paw!" She mouthed more slowly this time.

"Oh. You twisted your paw." Creamleaf meowed. Horsepaw nodded. "You need to work on speaking more clearly." She looked at the paw Horsepaw offered to her. "It'll heal quickly. I'll get you some poppy seeds for the pain, but otherwise, your good to keep working today." The medicine cat walked to her store, and picked out two tiny seeds. Horsepaw gladly ate them.

Horsepaw nodded gratefully to her mentor, and plodded our the den. She stopped when she eats a wail. She spun around, wide eyes.

"Has anyone seen Barktooth?!"

Horsepaw recognized Honeypelt's high pitched voice. The queen was hurriedly hobbling around the camp.

"Is he on a patrol?"

"He probably went hunting by himself."

"He'll come back."

"Don't worry! We'll find him."

Voices were coming from all around the camp.

"Crowpelt says she never sent him on a patrol. And Scarletnose says she saw him leaving camp at sunrise and he never came back!" Honeypelt wailed, answering everyone's questions. Whiteheart, the very pregnant queen, came up to soothe her denmate.

Crowpelt took hold off the situation. "Okay, we'll send search patrols out for him. Frogclaw, Birdtail, Rabbitear, and Scarletnose, go cheek the ShadowClan border. Sunspots, Thrushclaw, Bounceheart, and Deerstrut, check the RiverClan border. Other warriors, go spread out and check everywhere else. Come on, everyone! We've gotta find our missing warrior!" She snarled with anticipation. All the warriors scrambled out the camp entrance, and went where they were assigned. Honeypelt was taken to the medicine den to get thyme for the shock. Horsepaw followed. This was a good time to learn.

When she walked in the den, the queen was panting heavily with worry. "Look, take these and you'll be fine. Don't worry, we will find him, okay, Honeypelt? Please calm down. Think about your kits." Whiteheart soothed, licking the queen's ear. Creamleaf have her a few thyme leaves and Honeypelt ate them, instantly calming down. She nodded, "I'm good." Whiteheart and Creamleaf nodded approvingly.

"You may take her back to the Nursery now. Just make sure she stays in a nest. And keep her calm." Creamleaf told Whiteheart. She lead her friend out the medicine den and into the Nursery.

Horsepaw couldn't keep from worrying. Would they *really* find the missing warrior?

Chapter 17

At sunset, all the warriors had returned from looking for Barktooth. No one found anything. Honeypelt had broke down in tears, and once again had to be lead into the medicine den. Horsepaw's heart sank. Barktooth truly was missing.

Suddenly, she heard a commotion in the den entrance. **Barktooth!** She thought. But her tail drooped as she saw it was only Eagleeye. His fur wa ruffled up, and he had a wild look in his eye. His legs were shaking and he was panting. "I know where Barktooth went!" He yowled. Everyone gasped and held their breath. "He went to live with the Twolegs! I saw him go into a Twolegden and then a Twoleg picked him up, and then it looked like he was *enjoying* it!" He spat with distaste. Honeypelt wailed even louder from the medicine den.

Stormstar gasped from the Big Rock. "That's where he's been sneaking off to at night. I have had a talk with him about where he goes, but he just said he goes hunting. I knew there was more to it than that, but I never expected him to turn against us, and live a soft, kittypet life!" His tail swished in anger, and his face was twisted with rage.

"Will we go get him?" Grassfoot's voice rang in the camp. "I was once a kittypet, so I know my way around the Twolegplace." Her eyes were wide.

Stormstar shook his head. "He has made his choice. We cannot affect him now." A few cats nodded, agreeing.

"We *have* to go get him! He's the father of my kits!" Honeypelt yowled back to her leader. She was standing in the middle of camp, along with Whiteheart and Creamleaf.

"I understand why you want him back," Stormstar answered her with sympathy. His whiskers twitched. "But he chose to live

somewhere else. He was obviously planning this for a long time, because he had to know which Twolegden to go to, and the Twolegs had to get used to him. I'm so sorry, Honeypelt, but his life is with them now."

Honeypelt growled and howled with grief and collapsed on the ground. Creamleaf, Whiteheart, and Birdtail carried her to the medicine den once more.

"We cannot have anymore warriors betray us. I thought I trusted my clan, but I was wrong." Stormstar turned away from his clan. "If anyone else wants to betray me, and your clan, please tell me now, so I don't have to figure it out later. Please, it would be better now to know." He faced his clan again with heartbroken eyes.

Everyone looked at each other, mumbling. Suddenly, a voice rose up. "No one would *ever* betray you, Stormstar! Except maybe that kittypet, Barktooth," Growled Cavepaw. Other cats nodded.

"Yeah, I wouldn't!"

"Neither would I!"

"You're our leader! We worship you!"

Stormstar smiled, his face lifting. He had the support of his clan. Nothing could stop him, or his clan.

"This meeting is dismissed!" He yowled, hopping down from the Big Rock. He wandered into his den, and Crowpelt following close behind.

Horsepaw turned and walked into the medicine den. She needed some more medicine training from Creamleaf.

"Honeypelt, you can't keep fainting on us! We're running out of thyme because of you!" Creamleaf laughed. Horsepaw hid behind the medicine den leaf curtain as she spied on her mentor. "Be careful, but you can go back to the Nursery. But stay in your nest." Honeypelt nodded and padded out the den, and into the Nursery.

Whiteheart tried to follow, but Creamleaf's tail stopped her.

Creamleaf looked worried as Whiteheart spun to face the medicine cat. "You're *way* overdue, and I don't know what to do. I've never had a queen whose kits wouldn't come. Maybe we need to ask other medicine cats for advice, because this a risk for you and your kits. I think I'm going to travel to the other medicine cats to ask for help tomorrow."

Whiteheart gasped. "Don't give up on my kits! They'll come, just give them time." She said in a hushed voice. She looked down at her swollen belly with a soft gaze.

"Oh, I'm not giving up on them, it's just that Petalpelt died early, and didn't teach me everything. I'm just asking for help." Creamleaf answered in a whisper. She was still emotional about her former mentor.

Whiteheart nodded understandingly.

"For now," Creamleaf continued, motioning to one of her nests for sick cats. "You can sleep in here, just in case they come during the night. Make yourself as comfortable as you can. I know it must be very hard to sleep with extra big kits in your stomach." Whiteheart nodded wearily and collapsed gratefully into one of the nests. She didn't even have to energy circle the nest and make it comfortable.

Horsepaw gasped silently. This was a *big* problem for queens. It was also terrible for Horsepaw.

If Creamleaf was to leave tomorrow for help, that meant Horsepaw was going to be in charge of the medicine den for the camp while she was gone.

Chapter 18

Horsepaw got a troublesome night of sleep. She awoke with a headache and sweaty fur. She padded out the den, and picked a small shrew to eat. Whirlpaw walked up behind her.

"Hi," He meowed to Horsepaw. She sucked in a scared breath, choking on her shrew. She gagged, and Whirlpaw freaked out. She couldn't breathe. Whirlpaw barreled into her, knocking he shrew out of her throat. It ended up on the ground in front of her. She took deep breaths, with wild eyes and straight fur.

She stared at Whirlpaw. "Don't *ever,* and I mean *ever* scare me like that again!" She mouthed with a snarl. "I could have *died,* Whirlpaw!" Then her eyes softened. "But thanks for saving me."

Whirlpaw smiled slightly, scared and stunned. "You're welcome. And I won't."

Horsepaw finished her shrew next to Whirlpaw, who purred as their pelts touched. She stood up, said goodbye to Whirlpaw, and headed towards the training area.

"Hey, Horsepaw!"

Horsepaw turned slowly as she faced the cat she dreaded to see today.

"I need to talk to you." Creamleaf spoke quickly. Horsepaw nodded, and followed her into the medicine den.

Creamleaf sat down and said plainly, "I have to leave to talk to the other medicine cats about Whiteheart's kits,–" she looked at the tired queen, who was smiling wearily "–which are very late, and I don't know what to do. I'm going today, soon. That means you'll be in charge of taking care of the camp. Can you do it?" Horsepaw swallowed and nodded nervously. "Are you sure?" Horsepaw

nodded more eagerly. "Okay, good. You know to how to get a thorn out of a paw, how to treat coughs, wounds... you can do it. I've got faith in you, Horsepaw." Creamleaf's tail twitched. "Besides, one day I'll be gone forever, and you'll do this everyday." She smiled sadly at Horsepaw, who rubbed muzzles with her mentor.

The two pulled apart, and Creamleaf padded out the medicine den, and toward Stormstar's den. Horsepaw watched her enter it, and disappear from sight. She reappeared a little bit later, with a satisfied look on her face.

She rushed past Horsepaw and towards Whiteheart. "He said I could go." She mewed. Their heads were close. "If you think anything is happening, tell Horsepaw immediately. She isn't as trained, but she's very close." Whiteheart sighed and nodded.

Creamleaf nodded as well and walked to Horsepaw, who was watching the older she-cats talk. "Now, if her kits are coming, don't panic. She needs your help. Just feel her stomach, so you can tell where he kits are. You'll know when she needs to help you, because you'll feel a ripple pass down her stomach. Then when a kit comes, lick it dry, then focus on the others. Oh, yeah, get her a stick to bite on, too." Creamleaf stared in Horsepaw's eyes. "Got that?" Horsepaw nodded vigorously. "Now then, I will be on my way. I'm going to ask Oliveclaw and Pinepaw if RiverClan first. Goodbye, and good luck, Horsepaw." Then she turned touched noses with Whiteheart. "Stay safe, sister," She meowed softly. She turned, tail high, and raced out of the camp.

Horsepaw was shocked. She didn't know Whiteheart and Creamleaf were sisters! Whitheart had a brother, which meant Thrushclaw was also Creamleaf's brother! And that was Horsepaw's father, which means that... Creamleaf and Horsepaw were related!

Whiteheart sneezed. Horsepaw spun towards her. "Anything wrong?" She mouthed quickly. "Do you feel anything, like kicks or pains? Do I need to get you anything? Are they coming?"

Whiteheart just laughed. "No, Horsepaw," She had an amused gleam in her eye. "I jut sneezed! But don't worry, I'll let you know if I feel

anything, oh wise medicine cat." The brown and white queen answered, giggling.

Horsepaw felt her face grow hot. She felt proud though. "Okay, just making sure. This is my first time Creamleaf left me alone to take care of the camp." She shuffled her paws, and looked at them. "I'm kinda nervous." She faced the queen. "Plus, it's even harder to prove yourself worthy of being important when you're mute and missing a leg." She mouthed again.

Whiteheart understood. "Yes, I believe it is. It's also hard to prove yourself worthy of all you do is stay in the Nursery. It's also hard when you've had almost six litters of kits for the clan. And it's also hard when you first became with Frogclaw's kits when you were an apprentice." She sighed.

"Woah! *Six* litters!" Horsepaw said silently, sitting down with exasperation. "When you were an apprentice? Cinderstripe says it's kinda like a disgrace to become with kits as an apprentice. You don't have enough time to finish training."

"Yep." She replied softly, her yellow eyes filled with wisdom. "Your mother's right." Her stomach had a huge ripple, and then her eyes got wide and she yowled in shock. "I- I think my kits are coming!!!"

Chapter 19

Whiteheart's face got calm again. "Oh. Just a false alarm. These kits are kickers!" She took a deep breath. "I wished that was the time. I can't keep doing this. They are wearing me out! This is going to be my last litter. The clan can find another queen to provide the most kits for the clan."

Horsepaw sighed with relief. She couldn't deliver her kits. She almost killed Whirlpaw a while ago! What if she killed Whiteheart or her kits? Oh, it wouldn't happen, because her kits weren't even coming! It was a false alarm, thank StarClan.

"Are you going to become a medicine cat?"

The question came as a surprise. "Well, maybe." She said mutely to Whiteheart. "I don't think so. I've always wanted to become a warrior, and I think Creamleaf should take another apprentice." Horsepaw shrugged.

Whiteheart nodded once, then put her head on her paws.

"Creamleaf!" Wailed a voice from outside the den. Horsepaw's heart quickened. The cat entered the den. "Cream–" Cavepaw's lip curled. "Oh. Hello, Silentpaw. Where's our medicine cat?"

"She went to talk to the other medicine cat's for something." Whiteheart answered for her. Horsepaw shot her a thankful glance.

"Well, I have a thorn in my paw and I thought Creamleaf could get it out, but she's not here so I'll just go now," Cavepaw meowed, lumping out.

"Wait!" Whiteheart called. Horsepaw turned to her and shook her head wildly. "Horsepaw could get it out! She knows how!" Horsepaw looked at her paws in embarrassment.

Cavepaw spun around and stared at her for a moment before saying, "I'd rather limp than have her help me," Then he stalked away, tail high.

"Apprentices these days!" Hissed Whiteheart. "That piece of rabbit-dung. I *wish* he hurts even more." Then she peered at Horsepaw. "I'm sorry. I was only trying to help. I didn't know he didn't like you."

"It's okay," Horsepaw said with no sound. She made sure to look at Whiteheart so she could see her lips move. "I don't like him either. But I hate how he calls me Silentpaw." She sniffed. "Is that all he sees me like? Silent? Nothing else? Like I'm your medicine cat apprentice, give me some respect!" She found Whiteheart's gaze. "Is that how *everyone* sees me as?" Her eyes narrowed. "I'm never going to be good enough for this clan! I have three legs, I can't talk, what else is wrong with me!" She collapsed next to Whiteheart, and his her face underneath her paws.

Horsepaw felt Whiteheart's long tail lay across her shoulders. "No one sees you as that." She meowed softly. "You're just different, and that's it. That's *you."* Whiteheart chuckled. "We all have something different. I'm the clan's kit producer, Cavepaw has a slightly inverted paw, for StarClan's sake!" She looked at Horsepaw, who's eye was only visible from under her paw. "We all have a voice to speak up about our differences. You just have to say yours differently. With your actions, Horsepaw. Use your actions as your voice." Whiteheart smiled sweetly.

Horsepaw remembered. "Someone told me something like that when I was a kit," She mouthed.

"I know. Redkit was wise for his age." Whiteheart sighed. "I wish I was half as wise as he was," She stared in the distance.

"You are!" Horsepaw protested in disbelief. She stood up as quickly as she could with only three legs.

"I don't think I am," Whiteheart mewed again. "Us queens have lots of time to share tongues, since we're locked up in the Nursery all

day, watching the kits, so we always thought that you're your wisest form when you're dying, and about to join StarClan. Do you think that's true?" Whiteheart blinked at Horsepaw, who was awkwardly grooming her tail.

She looked at the queen and instantly stopped her grooming. "I think you're your wisest when you are," She mouthed simply, and continued licking herself.

Whiteheart shook her head, as if to clear it. "I think you're right. But, how do you know when you're your wisest?"

Horsepaw looked dead into her eyes. "You just know,"

"You're talking like a StarClan warrior giving a prophecy! You are talking in tongues, Horsepaw." Whiteheart warned. "Sometimes you can confuse yourself. Be careful what you tell other people when you talk like that," Whiteheart smiled at the apprentice.

Horsepaw nodded. "I wish I could talk," She mouthed sadly.

Whiteheart looked out the den. "Me too,"

Chapter 20

At moonhigh, Creamleaf returned with a mouthful of herbs and a mindful of solutions for Whiteheart. She congratulated Horsepaw for doing so good. Cavepaw finally came in to let Creamleaf get the thorn out of his paw.

Horsepaw looked at her paws when he came in. Tomorrow morning, they were to try the herbs on Whiteheart.

"Horsepaw, Whiteheart," Creamleaf began, looking at the two she-cats when Cavepaw left. "You two sleep in here tonight, because as soon as it's sunrise, we are going to try the herbs. So get a lot of sleep. Go get something to eat and go straight to your nest."

Whiteheart and Horsepaw nodded and both padded out the den and to the fresh kill pile.

"Whiteheart, you've gotta eat!" Horsepaw said mutely, exasperated. She pushed a juicy hare to the queen. "Tomorrow is the day you're kits come! You've gotta keep your energy up!" Whiteheart smiled sadly and shook her head, and pushed the hare away.

"What's wrong?" Horsepaw mouthed to her.

Whiteheart sighed and looked at the moon. "Something's not right with this litter." She meowed at last. She turned to look Horsepaw in the eyes. "Something bad is going to happen."

Horsepaw felt fear pierce her heart. But then she pushed it away. "You're just nervous. I think all queens are before birth! I'll be with you all the way through, though, okay?" Her lips moved with no sound. She laid her tail on the scared she-cat.

Whiteheart smiled and licked her ear. "Thank you, Horsepaw. You'll make a fine medicine cat." She began to eat the hare, and Horsepaw ate a rabbit. When they finished, they sank down on their nests. Horsepaw watched as the medicine cat and queen went to sleep,

but she didn't go to sleep. **Do I really want to give up my life and Whirlpaw just to become a medicine cat?** She thought before she went to sleep.

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At sunrise, Creamleaf kept her promise and woke both of them up.

"Okay, Whiteheart!" She meowed cheerfully. "This is the big day!" She was bouncing on the tips of her paws.

Whiteheart smiled wearily.

"Horsepaw, get us a good stick for her to bite on. And make sure it's not dead! Hurry back!" She told her apprentice. Horsepaw nodded and scurried out the camp.

"Horsepaw!" Bounceheart's voice called to her. "Time for battle training!"

"I can't!" She mouthed to her mentor. Bounceheart looked heartbroken. "Whiteheart's about to have her kits."

Bounceheart instantly cheered up. "Oh! Go help with that! We can train later. Good luck!" She smiled and padded into camp, tail up.

Horsepaw smiled back and went to find a stick. Soon, she picked a pretty oak piece of a branch that probably fell down during a storm. She went back into the den, where Whiteheart was laying on her side, and Creamleaf was feeling her belly.

Horsepaw held the stick up. Creamleaf nodded. "Good. Give her the stick after I give her the herbs. They're supposed to work fast." Creamleaf whispered something to Whiteheart and she nodded. Whiteheart ate the herbs that Creamleaf was giving her, and Horsepaw stuck the stick into her mouth.

They *did* work fast. Almost immediately, Whiteheart's muffled screams filled the medicine den.

"You're doing great!" Creamleaf soothed her sister, who responded with a grunt. A ripple passed through her stomach, and Creamleaf

whispered something to her, and Whiteheart screeched. A kit fell onto the moss.

"Horsepaw, lick it!" Creamleaf lead instructed, gently shoving the kit to her. Horsepaw licked it, trying to warm it up. It was a beautiful tortoiseshell she-kit with white paws and a white chest.

"Come on, Whiteheart! You can do it, love!" Eagleeye's encouraging meow came as a surprise to Horsepaw. She didn't know when he came inside to witness his mate giving birth.

Whiteheart just turned her gaze to him, and shut them tightly as another spasm gripped her body. This screech was even louder than the others.

Creamleaf's happy gaze fell. Her face was blank. She looked at Horsepaw, her green eyes frightened. "She's losing too much blood. I don't know what to do. I can't loose her!" She wailed.

Horsepaw had never seen her mentor looked so distraught. "What do we do?" She mouthed, but Creamleaf wasn't focused on her. She was concentrating on Whiteheart.

Please, StarClan, don't let her die! Horsepaw thought wildly. **It's my first birth, and I might already ruin it!**

Don't let these kits be motherless.

Chapter 21

Whiteheart's birth was not going well. She was losing too much blood, and Creamleaf and Horsepaw couldn't help it.

"Here comes the last kit!" Creamleaf's meow knocked Horsepaw out of her thoughts.

A little kit joined it's sister in the world. "Lick, Eagleeye," instructed Creamleaf.

Eagleeye, the little she-kit's father, dried it off.

"Whiteheart, look," Came Creamleaf's worried meow. "You have two beautiful she-kits. One's a tortoiseshell and the other's a brown one with white paws and a white tail. What are you going to name them?" Her voice shook as she told her sister what her kits looked like.

"Horsepaw..." Whiteheart's fading meow called to her. Horsepaw looked at the queen, her close friend. "Name one of my kits..."

Horsepaw couldn't suppress a gasp. In WindClan, it was a great honor to get to name another queen's kits. That meant you were a close friend. **I'm her *friend...*** Horsepaw thought happily.

"This one will be named... Splotchkit." Horsepaw mouthed. "She's beautiful..."

Whiteheart nodded. "Splotchkit..." she repeated. "Eagleeye, name the other,"

Eagleeye nodded wryly. The other kit was the brown kit with the white paws and tail. "Her name will be Applekit." He whispered. He drew Applekit close to his paws.

"Good names." Whiteheart rapsed. "Let them drink from their

mother one last time..."

"No!" Horsepaw mouthed. She wished she could talk so bad right then. "Don't go!"

Whiteheart looked dead at Horsepaw. "Horsepaw, we all have our destiny to fulfill. Mine ends today. We all have to accept our fate. StarClan made our fate like this because they knew we would be able to live it..." she gasped, and her eyes closed. Then they fluttered back open, to Horsepaw's relief. "We cannot change our destiny. But our destiny can change us if you allow it. Horsepaw, you're destiny changed your life forever. Being mute, you would have never been as close to me now if you could talk. And Redkit wouldn't be dead." Horsepaw flinched sadly. "And you would not be here right now helping me through this. Please watch over my kits with Eagleeye as I watch over you... Goodbye, Horsepaw. And goodbye Sister and Eagleeye. I will *always* be watching over you in StarClan..." Her shallow breaths ceased, and her flanks stopped moving.

Creamleaf wailed, and Eagleeye bowed his head. Horsepaw stood motionless, crying, and watching the kits nurse at their mother's motionless body.

"Goodbye, dear friend. Walk in StarClan as a fantastic mother and warrior. Now, run with the warriors of WindClan, Whiteheart, now and forever." Horsepaw mouthed. Creamleaf and Eagleeye didn't see her sorrow-filled goodbye to her friend.

Creamleaf collapsed, and Eagleeye still had his head bowed. Horsepaw heard him sniff. He looked up, eyes glistening. "We must do as she said: To watch over her kits. Me and you, Horsepaw. I think Honeypelt is very close to kitting, so she can nurse them." He turned back to his kits. "Now, let's go meet your foster mother, my kits." He grabbed them both gently by their scruffs, and hauled them into the Nursery, their pink mouths wailing pitifully for milk.

Horsepaw turned to Creamleaf, who was standing up shakily. "We need the Elder's to prepare her body for burial." She spun out of the den, and into the center of camp, and sulked towards Stormstar's

den. Apparently, it was up to Horsepaw to tell the old cats that Whiteheart was dead.

She trudged our the den, and towards the Elder's den. She walked in, and saw the Elders talking in hushed voices.

Horsepaw tried to clear her throat, but there was no sound, so she scrapped the floor with her claws. The Elders turned to her, surprised.

"What is it, Horsepaw?" Flowerpetal's sweet meow asked. She retired to the Elder's den as soon as her kits were made apprentices.

Horsepaw made sure to speak mutely extra slowly. "Whiteheart has died giving birth. We need you to prepare her for burial."

The Elder's bowed their heads in respect for the queen. "We will come," Soilnose rasped to the apprentice. Horsepaw nodded and padded out the den and into the medicine den. She needed sleep. She tried not to look at Whiteheart's dead body as she plopped into her nest without the queen's comforting words.

Chapter 22

"**May** you have good hunting, Swift running, and shelter where you sleep, Whiteheart." Stormstar's loud, sad voice called into the clearing. Cats were respecting the queen who helped her clan so much be providing he future for he clan itself.

Crowpelt was especially moved by her death. The deputy was one of the strongest and respected cats in the clan, but it was her mother after all. She was the only one in her litter who survived, so Whiteheart made sure to love and protect her like a lion.

The deputy would not get up, or allow any other acts to sit by her mother for vigil. Not even her father, Deerstrut. Finally, through her grief, she let other cats sit vigil. Horsepaw, as the only apprentice, sat vigil, but made sure she sat far away from the deputy.

Whirlpaw padded up to her. He crouched down quietly and put his nose close to her ear. "I don't know why you're sitting vigil for Whiteheart, but I respect that, and I just want you to know that I miss you in battle training." He licked her ear then walked away towards the apprentices' den, looking back and smiling at her. She smiled sweetly. She could always trust him.

Soon the vigil began, and she was surrounded by utter silence. Horsepaw thought about the short time that she had known Whiteheart, but the great times they'd had together. She was so wise and helpful to Horsepaw during those troubling times. She got comfortable, but not too comfortable to fall asleep, and prepared for the long night's vigil.
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In the morning, Horsepaw got up and stretched her legs. Then she remembered: The Gathering was tonight! Maybe she'd get to go.

She was approaching the fresh-kill pile, when she saw a cat come up to her.

"Horsepaw," Stormstar's voice rang in the morning's silence. "Come to my den." With that, he whipped away to his den.

Horsepaw turned to face him, but he was already storming towards the Big Rock den.

She walked up to his den, and saw him talking with his mate, Scarletnose.

"Scarletnose, can Horsepaw and I talk for a moment please? Alone?" He asked. She nodded and padded out the den, and acknowledged Horsepaw with a flick of her tail.

"Sit," He ordered.

Horsepaw made herself comfortable on the hard stone, and she tucked her paws beneath her.

"You know you're assessments are coming up. In a few days, actually." He began, chewing on a bone from his morning thrush. "Are you sure you still want to do this? You know what's at stake or you loose."

Horsepaw nodded confidentially.

"Okay." He sighed. "But I've noticed you've helped Creamleaf more than training with Bounceheart. Do you want to become a *medicine cat* after all this?" He spat.

Horsepaw's lip curled. "What's wrong with a medicine cat?" She mouthed harshly.

He smirked. "Oh, nothing," He laughed. "Just that they can't have a mate, or get the feeling that they protected their clan by winning a battle. All they know how to defend themselves is by using herbs!"

Horsepaw sighed and looked him in the eyes. Her eyes narrowed. "I *do not* want to become a medicine cat."

Stormstar nodded. "I knew you had some sense."

Horsepaw drew back. "Are you calling me rabbit-brained?"

Stormstar shook his head. "No, no! I'd never call a *warrior* of WindClan rabbit-brained." His eyes widened indignantly. "But you better get to battle training. You don't have a lot of time left." And with that, he stalked out the den with his tail high.

Horsepaw shook her head as if to clear it. **StarClan, help me decide what I want to do.** She pleaded silently.

Out in the clearing, it looked empty. No cat was there, except a few apprentices clearing out the Elder's nests. She padded to the fresh-kill pile and tried to eat for a second time. She picked a small hare and ate it in small, swift bites.

"Hey, Horsepaw!" Called Bounceheart from the warrior's den. He head popped out. "Let's train today, okay? What about now?"

Horsepaw nodded eagerly.

"She's needs to learn herbs right now, Bounceheart," Creamleaf meow answered the warrior's.

"But..." Bounceheart's voice faded to the older she-cat's.

Making sure that she was looking, Horsepaw said to Creamleaf, "I want to train with Bounceheart today, if that's okay,"

"Y-Yeah. Sure, go on ahead." Creamleaf said softly.

Horsepaw nodded, and walked with Bounceheart to the training hollow, but not without noticing Creamleaf's disappointed expression.

Chapter 23

Sunlight woke Horsepaw up the next morning. **Leaf-bare must be on the way, because of this chilly weather!** She thought, shivering. She hated leaf-bare because her short orange and white pelt couldn't keep the cold out. She wished her pelt was like Whirlpaw's long, insulated pelt.

She stretched, yawning. Horsepaw stumbled out the den, careful not to step on Grindpaw. He went on the dawn patrols three days in a row, so it made since he was still sleeping at sunhigh.

All the apprentices except Grindpaw were at the fresh-kill pile: Whirlpaw, Cavepaw, Cloverpaw, Dustpaw, Gorgepaw, Rainpaw, Raccoonpaw, Amberpaw, Lizardpaw, and Acornpaw.

As usual, Racoonpaw was boasting. "I'm becoming a warrior today. Eagleeye said so. I think Lizardpaw will too, but I don't know." He looked questionably at his sister.

"Yeah." She answered, her eyes gleaming. "Birdtail said so too. She said I did very well on the hunting part of the assessment." She stuck her chest out with pride.

Raccoonpaw rolled his eyes. "Whatever, Lizardpaw." He shoved her slightly with his shoulder. The young she-cat pushed him back. Soon the two littermates got into a play fight.

"You're not kits anymore. Get up," Snakestrike snarled as he passed by, giving the two fighting apprentices an irritated flick of his tail.

They stopped immediately.

Whirlpaw and Horsepaw stifled a laugh.

Raccoonpaw rolled his eyes again. "He's not much older than us. He can't tell us off like that." Lizardpaw nodded in agreement.

Horsepaw looked at him. "Well, yeah, he kinda can. He's a warrior."

She mouthed.

"No one was talking to you, Silentpaw." He retorted, his shoulder fur lifting up.

Horsepaw turned around. "Well, soon we can tell the future apprentices that!" She lightened the mood.

Racoonpaw smiled. "Yeah. We can!" His sour mood was forgotten.

It got silent again. Until Rainpaw said something no apprentice would dare to say out loud:

"Do you like being mute?"

The apprentices turned with wide eyes to Rainpaw, who was confused.

Horsepaw looked at her paws. When she was aware of the other 'paws looking at her, she looked up, and shook her head slowly. Everyone stared. Silence.

Horsepaw wanted to yowl to break the awkwardness, but luckily a few mentors came by and picked up their apprentices, and the remaining young cats padded away to change bedding, or look for ticks on the elders.

She breathed a sigh of relief. She felt a pelt brushing her, and turned to see Whirlpaw. "Was that true?" He meowed. "What you said about being mute?"

Without hesitating, Horsepaw nodded.

Whirlpaw trudged away, shaking his head as if to clear it.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey, gather here beneath the Big Rock for a clan meeting!" Stormstar's yowl broke the silence of camp life. WindClan cats flooded from dens and crowded the center of camp. Horsepaw felt squished as she sat by Frogclaw and Dustpaw. She was surprised when she felt a pang of jealousy as she saw Whirlpaw sit by Cloverpaw, their heads close together.

"I am proud to announce that WindClan will have two new warriors today!" Stormstar began, with a happy look at Raccoonpaw and Lizardpaw.

The two apprentices were grinning from ear to ear, their tails twitching nervously.

"Birdtail, is Lizardpaw ready to become a warrior of WindClan?" Stormstar asked the tortoiseshell she-cat.

Birdtail nodded formally. "Yes, Stormstar,"

"And Eagleeye, is Raccoonpaw ready to become a warrior?" Stormstar turned to the other mentor.

Eagleeye dipped his head respectfully. "Yes, Stormstar," He meowed.

Stormstar turned back to the apprentices. " I, Stormstar, leader of WindClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I present them to you as a warrior in their turn.

"Lizardpaw, Raccoonpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?" Stormstar asked the apprentices.

The young she-cat swallowed nervously. "I do," and her brother puffed out his chest. "I do!" He exclaimed.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Lizardpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Lizardtail. StarClan honors your hunting skills and loyalty, and we welcome you as a full warrior of WindClan." He said. Lizardtail gently rested her muzzle on their leader's shoulder, and stepped back.

"And by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Raccoonpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Raccoonfur. StarClan honors your skills in battle and your resilience, and we welcome you as a full warrior of WindClan." Stormstar repeated. Raccoonfur once again rested his muzzle on the leader's shoulder, and stepped back by his sister.

"Lizardtail! Raccoonfur! Lizardtail! Raccoonfur!"

The new warriors turned to see their clanmates shouting their new names in gratitude.

Once that was over, Stormstar had one more announcement:

"And here are the cats going to the Gathering tonight."

Chapter 24

"**Good** thing we both got chosen to go to the Gathering." Whirlpaw meowed as he walked by Horsepaw. She nodded in agreement.

The walk to the Fourtrees was a short one, so they didn't have very much time to talk. They didn't have very much to say anyway.

Whirlpaw padded away to catch up with Cloverpaw, leaving Horsepaw heartbroken.

"Hey, Horsepaw!" A cheerful high-pitched meow from behind called, and a tiny black figure raced up to her.

Horsepaw dipped her head in acknowledgment to Rainpaw.

"Two things," The new apprentice rushed quickly. "First, this is my first Gathering!" She bounced on her paws, and her blue eyes sparkled. "Are they fun?"

Horsepaw opened her mouth, but the she-cat went on anyway.

"Second thing." Rainpaw's voice got oddly quiet. "I'm sorry for what I said at the fresh-kill pile earlier."

Horsepaw gazed at her. "It's okay," She mouthed with a smile. She flicked her tail in a dismissing way. She touched the young 'paw's shoulder with her tail tip. "You're forgiven,"

The black apprentice smiled warmly.

When they arrived at the Gathering, Stormstar halted at the top of the hollow. He looked down, signaled with his tail, and WindClan raced down to the Fourtrees.

By the smells, Horsepaw could tail that they were the second clan to arrive. RiverClan scent was everywhere. Horsepaw suddenly felt overwhelmed by all the cats and their different scents.

A pelt brushed hers and she turned quickly. A light gray and black tom was standing behind her, smiling. His blue eyes were shining with interest.

"I am Fishpaw." He meowed. His voice was clipped, and he pronounced every word slowly.

Horsepaw looked at him, confused. "I'm Horsepaw," She mouthed. "I'm mute, and missing a leg." She looked at the smaller apprentice.

Fishpaw waved his tail at her with a toothy smile. "I'm deaf," he said with his clipped voice. "Can read lips. Is my first Gathering," He didn't speak very well.

"Oh," Horsepaw finally recognized his voice. Her mother used to tell Nursery stories about deaf cats never becoming warriors. This poor little 'paw would probably have the same fate. "Well, we're kinda the same. Both different."

Fishpaw smiled his goofy smile. "Yes, we are... same."

Horsepaw giggled inwardly.

Fishpaw padded away to join other RiverClan apprentices. So Horsepaw also walked away to go find more cats to meet.

She passed the Leader's Rock by the Fourtrees. She heard arguing behind it, so she peeled behind it to see Stormstar, and RiverClan's leader, Vinestar, almost in a fight.

"Well, Stormstar," Vinestar spat, his mud brown claws unsheathed. "Keep your warriors on *your* side of the border, or there will be more consequences!"

Stormstar's fur was bristled up, and his eyes were glazed with fury. "I will tell you one more time," he breathed. "That my warriors are *not* going over the border! You're clan smells like fish, and we only stick to the smell of the moor!"

Vinestar laughed menacingly. "Ah, Stormbreeze, remember that you were part of my clan before!"

Horsepaw was confused. She narrowed her eyes, knowing that the RiverClan leader was making things up.

Stormstar was furious. "*Do not call me Stormbreeze anymore.*" He spat each word with so much hatred for he leader, that he ruined the ground with his claws. "That was my past. I am WindClan's leader now. You call me Stormstar just like I call you Vinestar. You don't see me calling you Vinebranch anymore."

Vinestar nodded in consideration. He stalked around Stormstar as he said, "Well, as you know *Stormstar–"* he stopped to bow mockingly to the leader "–I was you're leader for a long time. You should call me Vinestar any day."

Horsepaw closed her eyes. **Stop lying, Vinestar!** She thought. But then she opened them again with realization. **What if he *was* part of RiverClan?!** She squirmed in surprise and stepped on a twig. As it cracked, the two leaders eyed her in surprise.

"Horsepaw! What–" Stormstar began with wide eyes.

Horsepaw swallowed nervously. "W-was he speaking the truth?" She asked mutely.

Vinestar snarled in disgust. "Speak, kit! Don't be such a coward to not talk!"

Stormstar whipped to face the brown tom. "She's mute, Vinestar! Remember me talking about it last Gathering?"

Horsepaw looked at her paws. She didn't know he talked about her...

"Oh, yes!" Vinestar hissed, coming up to face Horsepaw. "I *do* remember..." Horsepaw could hardly stop herself from retching from the leader's sour breath.

"Is that true?" She mouthed again with more ferocity.

Vinestar stepped back. "Do tell her about you're past," he chuckled, and smiled evilly.

Stormstar sighed and dipped his head. He lifted his gaze and looked embarrassed as he whispered, "I'm from RiverClan,"

Chapter 25

The apprentice gasped. "W-wha?" She mouthed.

Stormstar looked at his paws, and Vinestar chuckled. "Tell her," He meowed mockingly.

The WindClan leader raised his head to look at Horsepaw's special, purple eyes.

"I was originally part of RiverClan when I was a kit, apprentice, and when I turned into a warrior." He began sadly. "Then WindClan got a terrible sickness that killed almost every warrior, apprentice, queen, and kit. The leader died. They had no leader or deputy. All they had was two apprentices, four warriors, a medicine cat, and one queen.

"So Vinestar sent his strongest warriors of the clan to help build up WindClan. I was one of the strongest warriors, so I moved clans temperately. Well, that's how long Vinestar wanted me to stay.

"Anyway, all the cats in WindClan elected me as the new leader, since the deputy and leader both died from the sickness. I gladly accepted and became Stormstar. When it was time to go back to RiverClan, I didn't go. I *couldn't.* I had a clan to run! I just hoped Vinestar would see that now. He still hasn't forgiven me." Stormstar explained, glaring at his former leader. Vinestar returned the gesture.

Horsepaw was speechless. Her eyes were wide, mouth open.

"You don't have to say anything." Stormstar sighed. "I just thought that you'd forgive me. You're a kind cat, Horsepaw. I thought maybe you'd understand..." He looked at his paws.

Horsepaw got out of her trance. "I–" She began mutely.

"HELLO!" A cat called from the Big Rock. "We have a Gathering to

assess!" Another head popped up beside the first's.

"Coming, Waspstar." Stormstar answered, not taking his eyes off of Vinestar as he spoke to ShadowClan's leader. He jumped up the Big Rock and joined the leaders. Vinestar did the same. Horsepaw padded to the front of the rock and joined the other clans.

"There you are. I wondering where you went!" Fishpaw's clipped meow sounded beside her. The little apprentice was sitting next to Rainpaw, but turned to address his new friend. Rainpaw smiled and waved her tail at Fishpaw and mouthed, "I think he likes me!"

Horsepaw stifled a giggle. "Hello, Fishpaw," She mouthed to the deaf apprentice. He smiled and settled down beside Rainpaw. Horsepaw did too, and turned to the leaders.

Lightningstar stepped up first. "ThunderClan has been thriving. Prey has run well, and we welcomed to new warriors into the Clan; Hailstorm and Frostflower!"

He stepped back and let the two new warriors bask in their glory as the clans called their names. Two warriors close to Horsepaw held their head high as cats around them yowled loudly.

Waspstar stepped up. "ShadowClan is fine. We killed a fox near the ThunderClan border a few days ago. It didn't hurt any cat badly, just a few scratches that Fawnstripe and Juniperpaw could handle." She looked at the medicine cats gratefully.

Horsepaw shuttered inwardly. Waspstar was a killer. She didn't let any animal out of her territory without bad wounds, or death. Especially badgers, because one of them killed the former leader Fruitstar, her mother.

Stormstar stepped forward. "WindClan is doing well. We had a new litter of kits, Applekit and Splashkit. Sadly, Whiteheart died giving birth to them." He bowed his head in respect.

A few gasps and wails escaped the crowd. WindClan cats also bowed their heads, and Horsepaw felt a sharp pang of grief for the queen. The leaders looked sympathetic, except Waspstar who rolled

her eyes and scowled in disgust.

"I am sorry for your loss, Stormstar," Vinestar said with fake sympathy. Only Stormstar and Horsepaw could tell, from the look in his eye. "RiverClan is basking in prey this new-leaf. The river is bursting with all the fish. We recently had two new apprentices; Darkpaw and Bushpaw!" He smiled at two little apprentices near the front as the clan yowled their names.

Once all the leaders finished, the cats shared tongues for a moment while the leaders talked on the Big Rock. When they broke up, the clans left one by one. WindClan was the last to leave, and Horsepaw actually was sad as she said goodbye to Fishpaw. She was also the last to leave in her clan, with Rainpaw beside her, but only half listening to the apprentice, as she recalled what happened with her leader.

Chapter 26

Back at camp, Horsepaw trudged straight to her nest. It was way past moonhigh now, and every clanmate was asleep beside a few warriors. Horsepaw was stuck between Whirlpaw and Grindpaw, who was sleepily soundly. Whirlpaw, on the other paw, was snoring. Loudly. Everyone else was softly snoring or twitching in their sleep.

But as soon as Horsepaw hit the nest, she couldn't hear them anymore. She fell asleep immediately.

She fell into a dream.

She was surrounded by a forest. She was in a clearing. The sky was bright blue. Brighter than she'd ever seen. Horsepaw heard voices all around her. She turned, trying to catch a glimpse of the animal talking to her, but they disappeared as soon as she spun towards them. They were all saying the same thing. "Why, Horsepaw, why? You let Whiteheart die!" They kept screeching.

Horsepaw whipped around in a circle, heart pounding. Guilt rose in her throat, threatening to make her want to run away.

Suddenly, a giant head appeared in the sky. "Horsepaw!" Whiteheart's head mewed. "You're a failure! I died because of you...!" Her eyes closed, let out a breath, and disappeared. Images of Eagleeye and Creamleaf's heartbroken faces replaced Whiteheart's head.

Horsepaw shook her head, turning and racing away, tail streaming out behind her. **No, no, I-I didn't mean for Whiteheart to die! It wasn't my fault, was it?** She thought wildly, weaving her way through trees and bushes. The voices behind her kept mocking her, chanting-

"Horsepaw!" Whirlpaw's voice mewed in the darkness. "Wake up!"

Horsepaw opened her eyes. She was in her nest and the other apprentices were still asleep. It was a little before sunrise. Whirlpaw's figure was was in the shadows.

"You were meowing things in your sleep like 'Whiteheart' and 'kits' and stuff. I know you still miss her." Whirlpaw comforted, wrapping his tail around Horsepaw, who was shivering.

Horsepaw nodded in thanks. She staggered up out of her nest, still troubled by her dream.

Whirlpaw sat down and drew a paw over his ear. "Anyway, everyone's talking about how your assessments are in two days. I hope you've been training a lot because you've gotta pass both assessments to get to choose to be a warrior with me! And maybe..." he looked at his paws.

Horsepaw cocked her head to a side in question.

"Maybe we could become mates..." He looked at her. Whirlpaw saw her wide eyes and quickly explained, "When we're warriors! Not now." Horsepaw calmed down. Whirlpaw turned towards the den entrance. "Ugh, gotta go. Grassfoot's calling me. Bye," Whirlpaw spun around and raced out the den. Horsepaw wondered what she did when she heard no one calling the apprentice.

Horsepaw stumbled out the den, and into the clearing. Cats were everywhere; sharing tongues, eating together, heading out on patrols. They were also gossiping about Stormstar being half-clan. He had announced it to the clan after the Gathering. He got negative responses. But everyone was happy right now. This was what camp life was like! Horsepaw was so happy to be part of a clan.

She went to find Bounceheart. Creamleaf's training could wait. She found the older she-cat sharing prey with Frogclaw.

"Can we train?" She mouthed to her mentor.

Bounceheart smiled and nodded. "Sure." She turned to Frogclaw,

who stopped eating the rabbit. "Sorry. We can eat later, but we need to train. Her assessments are in two days!"

Frogclaw nodded. "Of course. Good luck, Horsepaw." He meowed as he picked up the rabbit and went to eat with Thrushclaw. He smile at them as he padded over.

"Okay," Bounceheart's whiskers twitched. "Let's go. We're going to work on your hunting skills." She lead Horsepaw to the training area, and told Horsepaw to get in the hunting crouch.

"Not bad." Bounceheart said, approvingly. "But just keep your legs bunched up. Don't splay them outwards. Now, let's go hunt-"

They was a commotion in camp. Horsepaw and Bounceheart raced into camp, ready for an attack.

Grassfoot was standing at the entrance to the camp. Her eyes were wide, and her fur was ruffled. "Whirlpaw's been captured by RiverClan!"

Chapter 27

Cats gasped. Horsepaw was dismayed. Whirlpaw was *captured* by RiverClan?!

Bounceheart unsheathed her claws. Horsepaw could hear a growl form in her throat. "Those mange-pelts!" She snarled slowly.

Honeypelt was at the Nursery entrance, and when she heard the news, she drew Applekit and Splotchkit to her paws with her tail.

Stormstar came down from his den with Scarletnose. "*What?*" He demanded. "How!? He's a smart apprentice. Grassfoot," he motioned to Whirlpaw's terrified mentor. "Tell is how it happened."

Grassfoot was calming down, her fur starting to settle down. She cleared her throat and started shakily. "We were patrolling RiverClan's borders. I let Whirlpaw mark a spot next to the bushes. Then," she stopped to take a breath. "Then, a huge RiverClan patrol popped out the bushes, and grabbed him. I tried to help, but more warriors appeared behind me and held me back. They dragged him into their territory and back to camp. As soon as they left, I came back here because I new I couldn't take them alone." Horsepaw noticed for the first time that she had a few scratches on her flanks, and blood was trickling down her sides.

Stormstar was taking his into consideration. His tail swished in thought. He drew out a breath. "Okay." He looked at Scarletnose, who was worried. "We need to send in a patrol."

Cats all around began to volunteer to get the apprentice back. Grassfoot was too, but Creamleaf was there treating her wounds, so she couldn't move very much.

Stormstar was looking at each cat, meeting their gazes. "I will take anyone who wants to go. But I need warriors to stay here and guard the camp, just in case RiverClan tries to attack while we're gone."

Cats nodded, looking at each other, deciding what they wanted to do.

Frogclaw, Thrushclaw, Amberpaw, Acornpaw, Dustpaw, Hawktalon, Rabbitear, Horsepaw, and Eagleeye went on the patrol with Stormstar and Scarletnose to get Whirlpaw. The patrol headed out to the border between the swimming clan.

Dawn was approaching. The birds were calling to each other in warning of the troop of cats slinking through over the moor. The sun was peeking over the
forest and the grassy land. The prey was waking up and searching for breakfast.

When the patrol reached the RiverClan border, Stormstar ordered them to halt.

"Okay," he whispered to the patrol. "I will go in and order Whirlpaw back. If they don't give him back, I will give a signal"–He kinked his tail– "and you guys will jump out of your hiding places, and get into battle stances. When I give the order, we attack." He looked at every cat. "Got it?" The patrol nodded and Horsepaw nodded slowly.

Stormstar our everyone in a hiding place in the bushes. Horsepaw could get a good view of the camp from her hiding spot. Stormstar then padded into the clearing confidently. RiverClan warriors flooded the camp to meet Stormstar, and question why he was here. Horsepaw saw him speak, and the warriors bristle. One warrior, Boldclaw as Horsepaw could tell, snarled something in reply, and Stormstar kinked his tail. The signal! All the WindClan warriors jumped out of their hiding places.

"Are you so keen about keeping him now?" Stormstar challenged when all of his patrol busted out of the bushes.

Boldclaw drew back, and eyed each rival warrior carefully. He motioned to a she-cat with a black pelt and white dapples beside him, Mistdapple, and she turned back to the apprentices den. A few moments later, she appeared with Whirlpaw, who was trying to

look brave, but Horsepaw could obviously tell he was scared from his fear-scent.

A menacing laugh sounded from above. Everyone looked up and saw the evil Vinestar strut down from his den. "Finally back, Stormstar! What took you so long to ditch the rabbit clan?"

The WindClan cats looked at each other confusingly, and Horsepaw's fur bristled. She was the only one in the clan beside Stormstar himself who knew about his original clan heritage.

Stormstar snarled. "I will *never* come back to this clan. WindClan is my clan now. Deal with it." His claws unsheathed quickly.

Vinestar's eyes narrowed. "Okay." He spat. "Why are you here?"

"You know why."

"Do I though?" Vinestar answered, hopping down from his den entrance, and landing in front of the other leader. "Tell me,"

Vinestar's breathed bathed Stormstar's gray muzzle as he answered, "To get my apprentice back."

Vinestar stepped back. "Ha!" He laughed. His yellow fangs gleamed in the sunlight. He looked right at Stormstar as he corrected:

"You mean, to get your *son* back,"

Chapter 28

Every cat gasped, from both clans. Everyone knew about Whirlpaw's unknown history, how he was left in the forest to die, along with his littermates. One day, a WindClan warrior found them, and took them back to the clan. Cherrymoon offered to take care of them, as her kits just became apprentices and she still had milk left. No one knew their parents, and no one had spoken of it.

But now...

"*What?*" Stormstar bristled, legs stiff. "Of course he's not my son!"

Scarletnose looked at Stormstar. She took a deep breath and glared at Vinestar. "Are you so desperate now for attention and power that you'll stoop so low as to *lie*?"

Vinestar's menacing smile returned. "Oh, Scarletnose. You know I'm now lying." He turned to face Stormstar, who's lips were curled. "Tell them about your son,"

Stormstar took a deep shaky breath to calm his anger. "For the last time, he is *not* my son!"

Scarletnose rested her tail on her mate's shoulder. "Maybe we should tell them." She whispered into his ear fur.

Stormstar nodded and sighed. "He is my son,"

Cats gasped and whispered to each other. Horsepaw's mouth was agape, but Whirlpaw's was even bigger.

"What?!" He snarled. He wasn't very happy. "We haven't you told me?!"

Scarletnose defended her mate. "We wanted to protect you!"

"How is that *protecting* me?" Whirlpaw cried back to his mother. He broke free of Mistdapple and stopped right in front of his parents.

"We didn't want anyone to know," Stormstar began sadly. "Because we didn't want you to have special treatment. Also, we didn't want you to get in the way of our duties. And we didn't want you to know that you were half-clan."

Whirlpaw snorted. "So you didn't want us after all?"

"No, that's not it!" Scarletnose answered desperately. "I will always love my kits. But I didn't want to go to the Nursery, and Stormstar didn't want you to take up all his time. And we were ashamed that you were half-clan."

"You're sure sounding like good parents right now. And I can't believe a *half-clan leader* would have kits who were half-clan, and leave them to die in the forest!" Whirlpaw rolled his eyes, and stalked out of RiverClan's camp.

Everyone was speechless.

Except Vinestar. "That went well" He laughed. "Maybe you should have told them earlier." His grin left his face. "Leave my camp, now,"

All the WindClan patrol returned back to their camp without having to be told twice.

Dustpaw trudged behind. He was also Stormstar's son, being Whirlpaw's brother. He wasn't taking it to well. He was muttering to himself, and shaking his head as if to dismiss a troublesome thought.

Horsepaw decided to talk to him. She fell backwards, behind the patrol and caught up with the apprentice.

"Hi," She mouthed to him.

Dustpaw was looking at the ground.

Horsepaw nudged his shoulder. "Hi," she tried again.

Dustpaw looked at her. "Oh, hello."

Horsepaw instantly felt embarrassed. "I-I just wanted to see if you were okay. You know with all the news and stuff." She saw he was looking at her dully. "I'll just g-go now." She hurried ahead with her head down, and she felt Dustpaw's eyes burning into her fur.
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When the patrol got back, Whirlpaw was already there. He had already spread the news, so every cat was anxiously waiting for their arrival.

"How could you, Stormstar?"

"Half-clan kits?"

"What a shame,"

"Why?"

Stormstar sighed, and jumped on the Big Rock. He stood tall as he announced to the clan: "I am sorry Whirlpaw, Dustpaw, Rainpaw, And Cloverpaw. I would have never done such a thing if I wasn't leader. But I did do it." He hung his head in shame. "Please forgive me, my kits. And especially forgive me, my clan. Do I have my clan's support, even though I went against the warrior code?"

For a moment, no cat answered.

Then the clearing was lit with voices, good and bad.

"We forgive you, Stormstar!"

"I dunno..."

"You messed up bad,"

"I'll always follow you!"

Stormstar's head rose. A small smile formed on his lips. "Thank you," He mustered. He looked more regal, and powerful; his gray pelt rippling with muscles.

Whirlpaw was sitting down, near the outside of camp. His head was down, and he was shuffling his paws. He didn't speak. He didn't look very forgiving right now.

Horsepaw wondered if he ever would forgive his father.

Chapter 29

Sunlight in the apprentices' den woke Horsepaw up. Whirlpaw's nest was empty. **He's probably talking to his parents.** She thought as she stumbled out of her nest and went to the fresh-kill pile.

Bounceheart padded up to her as Horsepaw was eating a thrush. She looked up at her mentor.

"Ready to train?" Bounceheart mewed. "Tomorrow's the big day!"

Horsepaw nodded, mouth full of feathers. She swallowed, and finished her thrush quickly. The two traveled to the training area.

"Today," Bounceheart began, sitting down and wrapping her tail around her brown paws. "we are going over a new move. And then we'll find you a partner to practice against." She stood up. "Now, let's get started. This move is the Front Paw Strike. Okay, so you're facing your opponent's face. Then you suddenly lash out with your front paw and slice downward at their face and features. Make sure you unsheathe your claws for this move, but make sure to sheathe them for right now," Bounceheart explained. She crouched in a battle stance in front of Horsepaw. "Try it on me,"

Horsepaw squared up to her mentor. She concentrated hard, and realized she only had one front paw. How would she balance without her front paws? She hesitated, opening her mouth to protest.

Bounceheart stood up. "I know," She meowed, pointing with her tail to her missing leg. "But that's why I chose this move. You can balance on your back legs, and quickly strike. But you have to be quick, so your opponent doesn't attack your belly. Wanna try?"

Horsepaw nodded solemnly.

Once again, they prepared for a practice fight. Bounceheart was the

enemy warrior, and Horsepaw got to try the move. Horsepaw reared up to strike, but Bounceheart was faster, and struck out with her forepaws at Horsepaw's exposed belly. Horsepaw fell down and grunted in frustration.

"Try again," Bounceheart encouraged.

So she did. Horsepaw reared up and struck out at Bounceheart's head, faster this time. She landed a blow, and tried to fall back down, but Bounceheart lashed out and met her mark.

Horsepaw didn't care that her belly throbbed, she completed the move!

Bounceheart smiled. "Good job!" She meowed, her gaze warm. "But try getting down faster so I don't hit your stomach. But otherwise, great job, Horsepaw!"

They tried the move a few mores times, until Horsepaw got it just right. Then they looked for another apprentice to fight against.

Cavepaw was the only one around.

They approached him, and his mentor, Rabbitear.

"Hey," Bounceheart mewed as they padded up to the toms. "Rabbitear, can Horsepaw practice fight with Cavepaw? Or are you busy with him?"

Rabbitear smiled. "Sure." Cavepaw scowled behind him, and Rabbitear turned to him. He instantly smiled. "Sounds great!" Cavepaw faked.

"Let's go then," Bounceheart started towards the training area.

The WindClan cats padded to the area, and saw that other apprentices were there. Luckily, the main battle training part was unoccupied.

"Get into positions." Rabbitear meowed. As the apprentices squared up, the tom turned to Cavepaw. "Use the new move I just taught

you." Cavepaw nodded.

Bounceheart whispered in Horsepaw's ear: "Use the new move I just taught *you*."

Horsepaw smiled at her mentor.

Bounceheart touched her nose to her apprentice's ear. "Good luck," she murmured.

Once the mentors were ready to watch, Rabbitear gave the signal. The fight was starting!

At once, Cavepaw lunged at Horsepaw. She'd dodged, but was almost a victim to his sheathed paws. She regained her balance, and he turned to face her.

"I'm gonna *love* shreading you!" He snarled at her, claws unsheathing. He jumped into the air and twisted to land on her back.

Horsepaw was shocked over his words. She couldn't move in time, and his weight made her legs buckle, and she fell to the ground.

Cavepaw sneered. "This is easier than I expected,"

Horsepaw thought about the first move Bounceheart taught her: pretending that she was defeated. She went limp, and waited for Cavepaw to get up.

He didn't.

Horsepaw instantly knew. All WindClan apprentices learned this move. She had to think her way out of this.

Horsepaw thought quickly, and then tried to roll over. It was hard, but she managed to end up on her back. Then she got her back legs underneath Cavepaw, and heaved him off of her.

Cavepaw's smug face was knocked off and was replaced with shock.

Then he growled and hurtled himself at her. He rested up on his hind legs, and began to bring his forepaws down on her head.

Horsepaw's heart skipped a beat. **I know this move!** She thought, trying not to purr. Time instantly slowed down in her mind. Cavepaw's paw came down like a snail, and Horsepaw immediately darted out of the way. His paw met the ground, and he howled in pain and fury.

Horsepaw was behind the raged apprentice, and she used her head to butt his hindquarters. He went sprawling on the ground. Horsepaw got on top of him, and held him down as he struggled to get up. He finally went limp, and Horsepaw thought it was the same move she used, but she heard Rabbitear's meow behind her.

"It's over," He rasped quietly, with a bit of shock in his voice. "Horsepaw wins."

Horsepaw heart swelled with pride as her mentor and the other apprentices around congratulated her. Tomorrow, she *would* pass both assessments and become a warrior.

Chapter 30

The next day at sunrise, Horsepaw was awoken by Whirlpaw. He was finally back to normal, yet he avoided Scarletnose and Stormstar.

"It's your big day!" He meowed happily. "Your assessments! Stormstar, Bounceheart, and Creamleaf are already out by the fresh-kill pile waiting!"

Horsepaw scrambled out her nest, all her weariness was forgotten. She licked her chest fur quickly as she and Whirlpaw hurried out the den.

The older cats were waiting, talking quietly, heads together. As the apprentices approached, they broke up and Bounceheart and Creamleaf smiled.

"First," Stormstar began with a blank expression, "you will do the medicine cat assessment. Then after that, you will do the warrior assessments. Understand?"

Swallowing her nervousness, Horsepaw nodded.

Bounceheart purred. "But first, get some fresh-kill and groom your pelt. You've got to look nice, you know,"

Horsepaw gave her chest fur a couple embarrassed licks. The other cats padded away, except Whirlpaw who stayed to talk.

"So," He meowed as he settled with a small rabbit. "Are you excited? Nervous?"

Horsepaw swallowed some of her thrush. "Well," She mouthed slowly, "I'm very excited, but I'm afraid I'm gonna mess up, and it'll cost me the rank of a warrior!"

Whirlpaw nodded. "I understand," He mewed.

They finished their prey in silence and Whirlpaw went away with Grassfoot. Horsepaw padded over to Creamleaf, who was waiting with Stormstar in the medicine cat den.

"We know that there isn't really a medicine cat assessment," Creamleaf meowed. "But under your circumstances, it is needed."

Horsepaw nodded nervously.

"Don't be nervous," Creamleaf soothed and Stormstar looked at her expressionless.

Horsepaw nodded again, even more anxious.

"Now," Stormstar announced. "I'm going to leave so you can do your assessment." He looked at Creamleaf and then Horsepaw. He dipped his head to them both. He trotted put the den.

Creamleaf turned to her apprentice. She smiled slightly. "Let's start. What is this?" She picked up an herb. "And what is it used for?"

"Marigold," Horsepaw mouthed. "And it helps with stopping infection, and bleeding. Used for inflammation of stiff joints."

Creamleaf nodded. "And this?"

"Juniper berries," Horsepaw said mutely again. "Helps with bellyaches,"

Creamleaf smiled approvingly.

This happened until all the herbs were through. Then they went on with situations, and what to do. Horsepaw aced that as well.

Later, when they finished, Horsepaw and Creamleaf went to report to Stormstar.

"Great," He meowed. "Now, retrieve Bounceheart for the warrior

assessments."

They did as they were told, and luckily, Bounceheart just got back from a hunting patrol. Creamleaf left her apprentice with the other mentor, and wished her luck.

Yeah, Horsepaw thought. **I'm gonna need it!**

"Hello!" Bounceheart meowed cheerfully. "Ready?"

Horsepaw nodded vigorously.

"Good," Her mentor said, padding towards the training area. "First, we're working on battle training. You have to fight me,"

Horsepaw could barely keep her mouth shut in shock. How could she fight a warrior? She was just an apprentice who didn't even get the right amount of training time, for StarClan's sake!

Bounceheart stopped. She smiled. "I really enjoyed training you, Horsepaw. You'll make a fine warrior, but you have to pass this, and the hunting part. I know you can do it; you show me every day in training! Just show me now, because today, it matters." Her tail flickered, and she crouched down. "Tell me when you're ready,"

Horsepaw swallowed nervously, and crouched down as well. She nodded to Bounceheart, who got the signal. "Go," She mewed.

Horsepaw charged. She swiped at her mentor, who easily darted to one side. Horsepaw felt the brown warrior's paws meet her pelt.

She whipped around and faced her mentor. Horsepaw looked into the older she-cat's eyes. Bounceheart's green gaze was filled with hope. Horsepaw felt new energy course through her as she saw that her mentor believed in her.

Horsepaw smiled slightly, and lunges for her. Her heart swelled with pride as she felt her paws meet the she-cat's shoulder. Horsepaw knocked Bounceheart on the ground, and pinned her down.

It can't be that easy! Horsepaw thought with a prickle of suspicion in her belly. She knew her mentor was up to something.

She was right. Bounceheart thrust her weight into her back legs as she kicked Horsepaw off of her. Horsepaw fell on the ground, her breath gone.

Before she recovered, Bounceheart was already on top of her. Horsepaw struggled and wiggled, trying to get out of her grip. Finally, she slithered put and jumped on Bounceheart's back. Bounceheart's legs buckled and she collapsed on the dirt. Horsepaw felt triumph in her fur.

Bounceheart heaved her body, and stood up. Horsepaw's eyes widened. She didn't know that her mentor was *that* strong! Then, Bounceheart fell backwards, squashing Horsepaw on the ground. Horsepaw tried again to get out of her grasp, and prevailed. She lunged for her mentor's belly, and failed. Then, she jumped into her hind paws, stumbling a bit without her other leg to balance. Horsepaw brought her forepaw down on her mentor's head and ears. She made her mark, and Bounceheart was in shock. She stumbled up onto her paws and sighed.

"Okay, okay." She panted. "That's enough. Thank you, Horsepaw. Now, you have until sundown to hunt. Come back, and we'll see how much prey you have. Good luck,"

Bounceheart sent Horsepaw on her way, and she smiled and shook her head at the eager apprentice.

Chapter 31

Horsepaw padded silently over the moor. Her ears and eyes were alert, scanning the grass for tiny animals. It was sunhigh, and she hadn't even seen a piece of fur! And she was hungry.

I wish *something* would let me catch it! She thought, and then growled softly. Horsepaw prayed to StarClan that a rabbit would come bounding across the soft grass. But nothing came. Horsepaw scowled, but then stopped. **Thank StarClan!** A rabbit was nibbling on some grass up ahead, a few fox-lengths away.

Horsepaw made sure that she was downwind, and then crept up on it as close as she could get. Then the rabbit's ears and head shot up. It look dead at Horsepaw, and it's little beady eyes locked into her mind. Nothing was going to stop her from killing this rabbit!

It started to run. It raced among the grass, but Horsepaw was quick to follow. Most cats thought that since she was missing a leg, that she wasn't fast. But she was, with Bounceheart as her mentor. Soon, she caught up to the rabbit, and gave it a quick bite to his neck. It's sequel of terror was abruptly cut off as its life was ended.

Horsepaw stood up, winded. She smiled slightly as she looked at her prize. First one of the hunt. She still had until sunset, but she had to hurry. So Horsepaw buried her prey, and went on hunting.

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When Horsepaw padded back into camp, the sun was just setting. In total, she had two rabbits, a thrush, and a small shrew. Bounceheart and Stormstar were waiting for her by the leader's den.

Bounceheart smiled, and Stormstar's eyes widened in surprise. "Good hunting, Horsepaw!" Bounceheart congratulated. She sniffed her prey, and helped her place it in the fresh-kill pile.

"Thanks!" Horsepaw mouthed back when Bounceheart was paying

attention. Then they trotted back to the leader, who was licking his paw in wait.

"Now," Stormstar said after they were in earshot. "We wait until moonhigh, so I can talk with your mentors." He was staring at Horsepaw who nodded in understanding. Her stomach flipped. She was so scared!

With a wave of his tail, Stormstar sent Horsepaw away. She skipped away, her heart as high as a StarClan warrior. She joined a few other apprentices at the fresh-kill pile, even though she was too excited to eat. She sat down next to Amberpaw and Acornpaw. They were in deep conversation.

"I think I passed my assessment!" Acornpaw was meowing eagerly.

Amberpaw nodded. "Me too!"

Horsepaw nudged them. "I think I passed mine. But I'm nervous. What if I become a"– she shuddered–"medicine cat?"

The others nodded in acknowledgment. "I'm nervous too. But at moonhigh, we'll know what we are! I wish you luck, Horsepaw." Amberpaw said swiftly, and Acornpaw smiled. Then they turned back to each other.

Only one cat would understand me. She thought. She stood up, and looked around for Whirlpaw's white-and-brown pelt. She scanned the clearing, and saw him talking to Cloverpaw, Rainpaw, and Dustpaw. She padded over to them.

The apprentices turned to her as she approached. They all gleamed. "Hi!" Rainpaw yowled cheerfully.

Whirlpaw nuzzled her shoulder. "How's your assessments go?"

Horsepaw sat down, and made sure they were all looking. "I think I did good," she started slowly. "I did really good on the medicine cat part, but I think I did better on the hunting. The battle training could be better though," She finished regretfully.

This time, Cloverpaw spoke, her soft voice soothing Horsepaw's

mind. "Oh, don't worry. You only had three moons of training. You should have gotten longer. But, I think you did amazing for that length of time." The others nodded in agreement.

Once they had finished talking, Horsepaw settled in her nest, even though she knew she couldn't sleep. Someone would get her when it was moonhigh. So she rested comfortably, with her future in mind.

Chapter 32

Sometime before moonhigh, Horsepaw must have gone to sleep, because she awake in the night with a paw prodding her. It was Bounceheart.

"Let's go," She said quietly. "It's almost time." Then she took a look at Horsepaw's pelt. "And give yourself a quick groom. You look like a kit!"

Horsepaw smiled at her mentor as she hurried out the den. Horsepaw licked herself and thought in vain. Bounceheart would have been a good mother. She and her mate, Hawktalon, we're trying to have kits since they'd gotten together. But one night, Bounceheart received a message that she'd never be able to have kits. She and Hawktalon were devastated, but she put it behind, and focused on her clan anyway.

Horsepaw padded out the den, and into the clearing, just when Stormstar was calling a meeting. Cats streamed from their dens. Bounceheart was already at the bottom of the rock, with Thrushclaw and Acornpaw, and Sunspots and Amberpaw, and lastly, Creamleaf. They looked excited, their eyes sparkling.

Horsepaw joined them, and looked at the clearing. Hawktalon came out of the warrior's den with Eagleeye and they sat next to Frogclaw and Deerstrut. Cherrymoon sat next to Honeypelt near the Nursery. All the remaining apprentices sat together near the rock. Soilnose plopped down next to Cinderstripe near the Elder's den. The clan waited patiently for Stormstar to speak.

"Today is the best part of clan life," He began proudly. "The making on new warriors! We have three new apprentices earning their names." He hesitated for a heartbeat, then motioned for Acornpaw to stand next to him. She padded up shakily. He looked at Thrushclaw. "Is she ready to become a warrior?"

Thrushclaw nodded. "Yes,"

"Acornpaw," Stormstar recited with power. "Do you promise to uphold the warrior code even at the cost of your life?"

Acornpaw swallowed. She held her gaze and meowed, "I do,"

Stormstar nodded and looked at the stars. "Warriors of StarClan, look down on his apprentice as she has trained hard to learn your noble code, and it's my turn to commend her as a warrior in her turn." His eyes focused on Acornpaw, who was unsteady. "Acornpaw, from this day on, your new name will be Acorntail. WindClan honors you for your courage and strategy in battle."

Then, he did Amberpaw's ceremony, and she was given the name Amberpelt. The clan recited their names with pride.

"Acorntail! Amberpelt! Acorntail! Amberpelt!"

The newly made warriors puffed their chests out in pride.

When the crowd had settled, Stormstar motioned for Horsepaw to come up to him. Horsepaw hobbled up slowly, capturing this moment and locking it into her heart to treasure for forever.

Stormstar's expression was blank as he explained, "Horsepaw is a special apprentice. She trained as a medicine cat and a warrior. She did her assessments, and the deal was that if she passed them both, she got to be a warrior. If she failed one..." he let the suspense lay out. "Then I chose what her future will hold." He looked at Horsepaw, who shrank inwardly before his gaze. This was it.

"She failed one."

Horsepaw's heart plummeted down the rock. She looked at her paws and a tear slipped down her cheek. **All of this,** she thought, **for nothing.**

The cats were silent. No cat dared to disturb the grass beneath their paws. They looked in disbelief at their leader. No one expected this from the hard working apprentice.

Horsepaw faded to sneak a glance at her leader, and saw that he was *smiling?!*

Horsepaw was so shocked, that her mouth opened. She shut it quickly, and wiped the tear away. **He won't do it...** she thought.

Stormstar cleared his throat. "I get to chose what she is. I chose that she is..."

Horsepaw smiled slightly. By the way he was looking, he might make her a warrior!

"... a medicine cat."

Horsepaw felt fresh tears fall down her cheek as she heard the second bomb drop. She stared at him with hatred. **He was smiling to make fun of me!** She realized with fury. Is she wasn't on the rock, in front of the clan, she would have torn him to spreads.

Then a cat called from the clearing, ending the thick mood.

"Horsepaw, the medicine cat!" Whirlpaw's voice encouraged. "You'll be great!"

Then, to Horsepaw's surprise, more cats joined his calls.

"Yay, Horsepaw!"

"You'll be amazing!"

"It's a great honor."

"A medicine cat!"

Horsepaw looked at her cheering clan, and her heart filled with pride. **They're... happy for me...** she thought, and more tears fell down her cheeks. But this time, they were happy tears.

Chapter 33

Horsepaw cried as her clan cheered. As they died down, Stormstar spoke. "As it is tradition," he announced, "Creamleaf would make her a medicine cat down at the Moonstone. But, since we are all here, she'll will do it here tonight." He stepped back to let the cream pelted medicine cat take his place next to Horsepaw.

She smiled at Creamleaf, who looked in awe. "I, Creamleaf, medicine cat of WindClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. She has trained hard to understand the ways of a medicine cat, and with your help she will serve her Clan for many moons.

"Horsepaw," She turned to her apprentice. "do you promise to uphold the ways of a medicine cat, to stand apart from rivalry between Clan and Clan and to protect all cats equally, even at the cost of your life?"

Horsepaw's eyes gleamed, and smiled with pride. This was what she'd worked for her whole life. It wasn't as good as a warrior, but at least she wouldn't be an apprentice anymore. She'd have a name! And it wasn't easy either. "I do," she mouthed steadily, in wonder.

Creamleaf nodded in approval. "Then by the powers of StarClan I give you your new name as a medicine cat. Horsepaw, from this moment you will be known as Horsemoon. StarClan honors your determination and perseverance and we welcome you as a full medicine cat of WindClan."

Horsemoon rested her muzzle on the medicine cat's shoulder. She could barely stop herself from yowling in excitement. She turned back to her clan, who was smiling. Their approval was radiating off of them in waves. They looked... hopeful.

Then, they erupted in chants. "Horsemoon! Horsemoon! Horsemoon!" Every cat said in unison. Horsemoon soaked it all in. She raised her head to to the stars. "Thank you," She mouthed in

deep gratitude. Then she looked back at her clan, who was still celebrating.

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Horsemoon yawned. She awoke in the medicine cat's den, next to Creamleaf. It was weird, having to share a den with Creamleaf. Horsemoon missed Whirlpaw's soft, warm pelt at night. She shook her head, and stretched.

Horsemoon accidentally bumped Creamleaf with her tail. She suppressed a gasp, not trying to wake her mentor. Creamleaf blinked wearily and lifted her head. "Yes, Horsemoon?" She asked with a yawn.

Horsemoon smiled at her mentor. "Um, you weren't awake as early as you usually are, so I decided to wake you," she moved her lips as no sound came out.

Creamleaf chuckled, got up, and stretched. "You forget I'm old." She padded stiffly over to the herb store and went inside it.

Horsemoon followed her. "What are we doing today?" She questioned mutely.

Taking old herbs out of the store, Creamleaf cleared her throat. "Well, we need more herbs, especially horsetail and marigold." Horsemoon heard rustling and bustling of herbs and Creamleaf's backside.

A wail split the camp.

Creamleaf and Horsemoon staggered out the medicine den and into the clearing.

Cats were clustered around the Nursery. Then, Cinderstripe pelted out of it, and through the crowd of cats. She stopped in front of the medicine cat's. "Honeypelt's kits are coming!" She panted.

Horsemoon and Creamleaf nodded at each other. They pushed through the cats and into the Nursery, which reeked of fear-scent. Applekit and Splotchkit were huddled with wide eyes in the corner

with Eagleeye.

Honeypelt was panting in her nest, and Cherrymoon was stroking her ears with her tail-tip. "It's going to be okay," She soothed. When she saw the medicine cats, she smiled and turned back to the queen. "Creamleaf is here with Horsemoon. You're going to be fine."

Honeypelt didn't say anything, but her eyes were glazed with pain.

Creamleaf crouched next to Honeypelt. She felt her rippling belly, and nodded in understanding. She turned to her apprentice.

"Horsemoon," she instructed. "Go find a sturdy stick for her to bite on."

Horsemoon fled out the den. She raced out of camp, and began to bite on sticks. She felt a pang of grief in her heart as she remembers the last birth she helped with. Whiteheart's had gone wrong.

She picked a sturdy stick, and hurried back into the Nursery. She looked at Creamleaf when she gave the stick to the struggling queen. She took a deep breath and began to help.

Chapter 34

Soon, Honeypelt has three little bundles at her belly, suckling. Two toms and a she-kit. The she-kit was light gray with white flecks, and one tom looked just like Honeypelt. The other, looked just like Barktooth.

Honeypelt couldn't look at the tom that was a replica of her mate who left her.

Creamleaf smiled at the kits. "Wow. They're beautiful."

Horsemoon noticed how the kits weren't very lively, and the one that looked like Barktooth was barely moving. She told that to Creamleaf, and they checked the kits again. Creamleaf concluded that they were just tiny, and needed to be watched carefully.

"What're their names?" Creamleaf asked.

"Well," Honeypelt answered, not taking her gaze off her kits, "I'm going to wait until their eyes are open."

Horsemoon nodded.

Once they were sure the kits and Honeypelt was okay, the medicine cat's left the queen to rest. They padded back into their den.

"Horsemoon," Creamleaf began. "Go get some herbs from outside the camp. We're running low on borage."

Horsemoon nodded and padded out the den. She excited the camp, and dipped to her head to Falconwing, who was on guard. He nodded back.

She walked near the ThunderClan border, where she learned from Creamleaf was the best spot for borage. And to think.

Horsepaw arrived at the spot, next to the border. She picked a few borage leaves off of their stems, and filled her mouth. After she filled that up, she picked leaves and tucked them underneath her chin, and on her chest. She was about to trot back to camp, when she heard rustling in the bushes on ThunderClan's side of the border. She turned to see a ThunderClan patrol emerge from the bushes.

Hazeclaw was in the lead with Shrewpelt, Leafwind and her apprentice Quickpaw following. They looked annoyed.

Horsemoon smiled. "Hello!" She said silently when they were looking. "How's ThunderClan?"

Hazeclaw snorted. "Why do *you* need to know?"

Horsemoon's eyes widened. **Who put dirt in their fresh-kill?** She wondered. "Well, I'm the medicine cat now, and I'm allowed to ask." She answered mutely.

This time, Leafwind answered. "Well, why?" She retorted. Her apprentice, Quickpaw, nodded in fierce agreement.

Horsemoon rolled her eyes. "Because I *care.* Unlike *you."*

"Well..." Quickpaw's gaze instantly softened. He looked at his paws, and shuffled them. "This new-leaf is *really* hot and we're all kinda snappy." He meowed quietly.

Shrewpelt slapped her tail on the apprentice's mouth. "Don't tell them anything!" She hissed.

Quickpaw looked ashamed, and stared at the ground.

Horsemoon felt sympathy, but it was soon washed away as the patrol mocked her.

"How could a mute and three-legged cat be a medicine cat?" Hazeclaw scoffed. The others laughed, except Quickpaw.

"Yeah," Shrewpelt added. "How could she help them, by keeping

quiet?"

That did it for the ThunderClan cats. They laughed and giggled, and fell down on the undergrowth. Horsemoon scowled, and spun around and left angrily.
I hate this! She thought furiously. She was angry because of herself. Her disabilities. Her life. **I wish they'd die! All of those fox-hearts!**

She started to strut back to camp with her borage when she heard a wail of a cat coming towards her. She turned sharply and saw Quickpaw hurtling towards her, ears flat and panting. He stopped in front of her with wild eyes.

Horsemoon was surprised to see he apprentice in WindClan territory. She scowled at him. "Wh-" She began to mouth.

Quickpaw wailed again. "Hazeclaw's been attacked by a fox near the border!" He yowled. "Come help, please!" He pleaded.

Horsemoon wa shocked. Part of her didn't want to save them, because of the way they treated her, but part of her wouldn't let a cat die.

Horsemoon nodded. "Let's go," She mouthed.

Quickly blinked gratefully, then spun around and raced towards the border. Horsemoon followed, abandoning the borage and sprinting after him.

They crossed the border line, ignoring them scent-marks. Quickpaw led the way a little right of the border, and they skidded through the trees. Horsemoon was having a heard time keeping up from all the trees in the way.
I hope we make it there in time! She thought, heart pounding. **All these stupid trees are in the way! I'm used to open moor.** She continued to run, and then Quickpaw halted suddenly. Horsemoon skirted to a stop, just mouse-lengths away from the apprentice's hindquarters.

Quickpaw gulped. "He's in there." He said shakily, and pointing to a

little den in the brambles with his tail. Horsemoon padded in quickly to asset the damages.

She was going to help Hazeclaw, no matter what it took.

Chapter 35

Hazeclaw was a limp heap of fur. Horsemoon couldn't tell where the worst injuries were, because of his black pelt. Only his white paw gave something away. It was covered in blood, and blood was pulsing out of a deep wound on it.

Horsemoon swallowed nervously. The injuries were bad, and Hazeclaw was barely breathing. She didn't think that he would survive. But she would try.

She shook her head to rid herself of her thoughts, and Creamleaf's training came flooding back. **Marigold for the paw, and then cobwebs for the other little wounds, and...** Horsemoon thought, her mind whirling. She picked through Hazeclaw's fur, trying to find the source of the blood. Soon she found many deep wounds, and a really big one on his shoulder. **He'll walk with a limp forever.** Horsemoon thought, a sharp twang of sympathy flooding through her. **If he lives.** She dismissed it quickly.

Even though he was terrible, she had to try to help him. So she sent Quickpaw to find cobwebs, and he agreed eagerly. Shrewpelt stayed by Hazeclaw's side, and Leafwind paced briskly around the brambles. Horsemoon tried to send them out so she could have room, but they refused to go.

Leafwind shook her head once. "I can't. He's my littermate. I won't leave him." She'd meowed.

Shrewpelt's fur bristled. "You can't tell me what to do!" She hissed. "You're not my medicine cat!"

Horsemoon swallowed back her temper. "I'm *a* medicine cat though, and I know what to do, so listen to me if you want me to save him!" She mouthed quickly, not sure that the she-cat understood.

Shrewpelt definitely got some of it. Her gaze dropped, and she stepped back away from her clanmate, and let Horsemoon take a

look at Hazeclaw. "Help him," She rasped, suddenly looking older.

Horsemoon nodded. "I'll do my best," she said silently.

The brambles rustled And Quickpaw appeared with the cobwebs wrapped around his paw. He unraveled them, and gave them to Horsemoon, who dipped her head gratefully.

She started placing them on Hazeclaw's shoulder wound first, as it looked like the worst. Soon, it was packed with the cobwebs, and she moved on to some of the others.

Horsemoon was fixing a tiny wound on his flank, when his eyes fluttered open.

"H-help me..." he said hoarsely, his glazed eyes staring though her. "Please..." his flanks shuddered once, and they stopped.

Horsemoon gulped. **No!** She thought, mind fogged with grief. He bowed her head, but was aware as his flanks began to move again.

He stared right at Horsemoon as he whispered, "I'm sorry for what I've done..." Then, for the last time, he closed his eyes, and took a shuddering breath as the life left his body.

Horsemoon knew that he was home this time, and she looked at her paws as Shrewpelt and Leafwind raised their wails of sorrow into the air.

Horsemoon closed her eyes. **I've failed.** She thought miserably. **He's dead.**

She lifted her head sadly, and her gaze fell on the crying she-cats. Quickpaw was trying to comfort them, to no avail. He eventually stopped, and was quiet beside them, head low.

Horsemoon watched them and felt more guilty as their sadness grew on. "I'm sorry," she tried to say, but nothing came out. She felt even more depressed knowing that she'd never be able to say those words again.

The grieving cats gradually stopped their wails and cries, and were

staring at Horsemoon with so much sorrow that Horsemoon felt her fur began to grow hot, and she felt like moons dragged on. She turned around to look at Hazeclaw, because that was not as bad as the she-cats' faces.

Some cat sighed behind Horsemoon. "You tried your best." She recognized Leafwind's voice. "But it was no use. StarClan has claimed him now."

Horsemoon felt even guilty as Leafwind's words sank in. She slowly spun around to face them again. Leafwind's expression was sympathetic and sad, but Shrewpelt's was angry and filled with grief.

"You failed," Shrewpelt choked out. "And now my kits will never see their father. Thanks to you."

Horsemoon almost wailed. Or, would try to, at least. Now her guilt would never leave her, and her pelt prickled like claws raking her back. She pushed her way out of the brambles, because she couldn't take it anymore. The mood was as thick as a kit's new, fluffy fur. She started running, and raced out of the forest and into WindClan territory, ignoring Quickpaw's calls to come back. She collapsed on the long grass beside the stream by the ShadowClan border, and fell into a troubled sleep about her life and how terrible it really was.

Chapter 36

In the morning, Horsemoon woke up, and immediately felt the pains of hunger. It didn't compare to the pain she felt when she remembered Hazeclaw's death and the ThunderClan cats' wails. She stood up shakily, and decided to hunt. She used her skills when she trained as a warrior to track down a rabbit, and kill it swiftly. She trudged back to camp with it, and padded through the entrance.

The cats in the clearing all stopped what they were doing to look at her. Then they erupted in questions.

"Where were you?"

"We thought you were hurt!"

"Why did you go?"

"We've been worried sick!"

Horsemoon didn't have enough energy to answer them, and she stumbled past Stormstar as he was approaching, and into the medicine den, where Creamleaf was checking out Soilnose.

She stopped, and stared at her apprentice. Her expression of relief quickly changed to anger as Soilnose took the herbs that Crenaleaf was giving him before Horsemoon padded in. He swallowed them, and stiffly and quickly hurried out the den.

"Where's the borage?" Was all Creamleaf demanded when Horsemoon appeared and Soilnose was gone.

That was it for Horsemoon. Her sad feelings transformed into fury. She hurtled herself at Creamleaf and started clawing her on the face. Creamleaf screeched and fought back. Every second, Horsemoon knew that she was breaking the warrior code. But she didn't care about that, or the tears streaming down her face.

Eventually, cats heard the commotion, and Crowpelt shouldered

between Horsemoon and Creamleaf and snarled at both of them.

"What," Crowpelt hissed, "are you *doing*?!" Her gaze swiveled between the medicine cats.

Creamleaf's face was blank as she answered, "Horsemoon attacked me."

Horsemoon's rage melted, and she sighed. "I'm just upset, that's all." She mouthed to them both.

Crowpelt didn't like it. "Hmmm. You're just *upset.* And that requires you to *attack* your *medicine cat*?" Her eyes were narrowed questioningly at Horsemoon.

She caught Creamleaf's gaze as the story about Hazeclaw spilled out. The two she-cats listened carefully through the whole thing.

"Well," Creamleaf said when she finished, "you tried. You're still an apprentice, you know. You've still got a lot to learn."

Horsemoon nodded. "I know," she said mutely, "But I thought I could do it, and the last thing I heard before I left was Shrewpelt saying that her kits would never see their father!" She stared miserably at Creamleaf.

Creamleaf blinked. "You couldn't bring him back from the dead. He's in StarClan now, and one day his family will meet him again."

Crowpelt stood up. "Very interesting. I'll go tell Stormstar." She padded out the den, and Creamleaf and Horsemoon were left alone.

The medicine cat's began to organize herbs in silence. Horsemoon was lots in her thoughts, reliving Hazeclaw's death over and over again. Crenaleaf was thinking about her own things.

Honeypelt slipped into the den, her three kits behind her. She smiled at the medicine cats, as they spun to look at her.

Before Creamleaf or Horsemoon had a chance to speak, Honeypelt announced, "I've named them!"

"What are they?" Crenaleaf asked excitedly, and Horsemoon nodded eagerly.

"This one is ," Honeypelt replied, using her tail to point to the little she-kit with the gray pelt and white dapples. "This is Meltkit," she pointed to the tom that looked just like her. And then she pointed to the one that looked like Barktooth. She'd gotten used to him, but she told the medicine cats that she still longed for her mate in her heart. "And this is Breezekit."

Horsemoon smiled at the names. They were adorable. Creamleaf padded over to do a quick inspection of the kits. Horsemoon watched closely to see what she would need to do one day when Creamleaf was gone. She swallowed, praying she would never see the day.

Creamleaf stopped on Breezekit, concern blooming on her face. She turned to Honeypelt. "I see that Breezekit can't hear very well out of his right ear. I possibly think he's... deaf in that ear."

Honeypelt, seeing how she previously took the loss of her mate, actually took the news pretty well. She sucked in a breath and cuddled Breezekit close to her. She licked him over and over and would not let go, even at the kit's small protests. Though, Creamleaf did have to force her to let go of him.

Horsemoon looked at Breezekit, and noticed how his eyes were intelligent. He blinked, yawing. "I've heard about you," he mewed in a squeaky voice. "You can't talk. And I can't hear out of this ear," he touched his own ear and flicked it. "So I guess we're kinda the same." He smiled and Horsemoon felt a bond beginning to form out of the two of them.

Creamleaf whispered to Honeypelt, who nodded and nuzzled Breezekit. The old medicine cat signaled for Horsemoon to follow her out of the Nursery. Horsemoon trailed the cream-pelted cat out of the den. "Creamleaf," she mouthed while touching her mentor on the shoulder with her tail. Creamleaf looked at her, so Horsemoon continued. "Will Breezekit become a warrior?"

Creamleaf thought for a moment and then nodded. "Yes. I believe

he will be."

Chapter 37

A day had passed since Honeypelt came in the medicine den, and Creamleaf and Horsemoon has suspicions about Breezekit. Creamleaf was sent to watch Breezekit closely to see if he was special in any way.

Horsemoon was getting a thorn out of Dustpaw's paw when Whirlpaw appeared in the medicine den. Dustpaw left, and thanks Horsemoon for removing the thorn.

Whirlpaw's gaze was even when he said, "I wish we could still do it."

Horsemoon tilted her head in question.

"We can't be mates anymore."

Horsemoon's heart dropped to the ground. This was the first time that she'd thought about that. Now that she was a medicine cat, it was against the warrior code.

Whirlpaw sighed. "I'm sorry. But I think I'm going to be Gorgepaw's mate, but that can wait until we're warriors. She's so nice, and funny, and she's so good at hunting! I'm not, so we joke about that, and..."

He broke off as he saw Horsemoon hurt expression. Horsemoon was lucky that he didn't see her broken heart.

"I-I've got to go train now," Whirlpaw began, backing away awkwardly, and then turning around and racing out of the den. Gorgepaw joined him as they ran out of camp together.

Horsemoon sank to the ground. She covered her head with her paw, to try to hide the tears that were falling. She remembered the day that he'd asked her to be his mate when they were warriors... She'd hesitated, but she knew that one day that she would say yes. But

now, that would never happen. Just because she failed an assessment!

Eventually, she fell into a troubled sleep. Horsemoon knew that she was dreaming because of the place that she was in. It was starry, and no clan territory had a pond to swim in with light blue water.

The bushes moved behind her. She spun around and narrowed her eyes. A cat padded into the open, and it's starry brown and white pelt was strikingly familiar to Horsmoon. She almost cried out in agony when she saw her.

"Hello, Horsemoon," Whiteheart meowed happily. She nuzzled Horsemoon's muzzle and she purred.

"Whiteheart!" Horsemoon cried happily, and purred back.

Horsemoon suddenly halted. What was that noise? When she was speaking, she heard a weird, delicate noise.

Wait... it was her *voice.* She was *talking!* Horsemoon opened her mouth and said, "I can talk!" Her voice was velvety, and silky. She wished that Creamleaf could hear it. And all of her clanmates.

She danced around Whiteheart, who purred and laughed. Finally, Whiteheart mewed, "Okay. I'm here to talk to you. So stop playing like a kit!" She giggled.

Horsemoon stopped, and sat down excitedly. "Is it a prophecy?" She asked. She still couldn't get used to her voice!

Whiteheart shook her head, and her yellow eyes locked with Horsemoon's weird purple ones. "No, but someone is here to see you."

"Redkit?" Horsemoon questioned eagerly.

"No, me," A cat said at the edge of the pond on the other side. Horsemoon swiveled her head to see a heart wrenching pelt.

"Hazeclaw wants to talk with you." Whiteheart's voice interrupted her thoughts. "About his death."

Horsemoon swallowed nervously. "O-Okay," she agreed.

At that time, Hazeclaw arrived at where the she-cats were talking. "Yes. It's important." He turned to look at Whiteheart. "And private."

Whiteheart dipped her head respectfully, and padded away through the bushes. Horsemoon longed to call her back, but she knew that when a cat said it's private, it was. So she resisted.

Hazeclaw motioned to Horsemoon. He padded to the pond's edge, and waved his paw over the water. Horsemoon watched in awe as he created a scene of cats in front of her. She saw a cat with a black pelt standing next to a cat which Horsemoon recognized as Shrewpelt. She had two kits suckling at her belly.

Horsemoon was watching as the scene changed, and she saw Shrewpelt standing beside the kits, who were padding up to a cliff edge , which was ThunderClan's rock to announce meetings. She saw Lightningstar saying words, and the kits were beaming. Then the cats in the clearing erupted in cheering. Shrewpelt was smiling hugely as she watched the kits.

Then it changed again. Horsemoon saw a lightening bolt strike a cat. She cringed as the cat fell on her side. Horsemoon sneaked a look at Hazeclaw, who was expressionless. Then, the two kits who were in the last scenes, raced up to the cat. They cried as the cat died beside them.

Then the scene went away, and the water went back to normal. Horsemoon turned to Hazeclaw, who was padding back to sit down. Horsemoon followed.

"Those were my kits. And my mate." He meowed, looking at the horizon. The sun was going down. "That was their lives. Twirlkit and Tumblekit were sitting with their mother, Shrewpelt in the first scene. And then they were becoming apprentices." He took a deep breath. "Then, they were warriors as they watched Shrewpelt die."

Horsemoon gasped. "How do you know all of this?"

"Because I'm in StarClan now, and I can see these things." Hazeclaw answered. Then he looked at Horsemoon. "Every day I wish to go back into ThunderClan so I can watch my kits grow up, but I know that this was my destiny. And I'm fine with that because I can watch them from up here. But I want you to know something."

Horsemoon was miserable. "What?" She rasped.

"I want you to know that you do not have to feel guilty anymore for my death. It wasn't your fault. And I forgive you, and thank you for trying." Hazeclaw answered, watching Horsemoon closely.

Horsemoon smiled, and then the world went black as the dream was done.

Chapter 38

Horsemoon felt a huge burden being lifted off her shoulders as she woke up in the medicine den. Creamleaf was in her nest, asleep, because it was moonhigh.
No training today? Horsemoon wondered. **Did she need me at all?**

She stood up, and arched her back in a long stretch. She knew she couldn't sleep after the dream. So Horsemoon padded out into the clearing, and sat down, looking at the stars.

Horsemoon noticed a new star that night. She knew it was Hazeclaw's. But she didn't feel bad anymore about it. He forgave her. He thanked her for trying to save him. He was sorry for what he'd done to her.

A huge smile formed on Horsemoon's lips.

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At sunrise, Horsemoon blinked the sleep out of her eyes. She must have fallen asleep again when she was watching the stars. She got up on her paws, and realized how hungry she was. So she trotted a few fox-lengths to the fresh-kill pile. She took a small shrew, and ate it quietly.

Cats began to come out of the dens. A new day of clan life was beginning. Crowpelt was sending cats out on the dawn patrol, and sent cats on hunting patrols.

Creamleaf appeared beside Horsemoon. "Good mormimg, Horsemoon," She meowed and yawned.

Horsemoon nodded to her. Then she got excited. Maybe if she could talk in her dream, she could talk now! "Hi, Creamleaf!" She tried to say, but sadly, nothing happened. She hung her shoulders and looked at the ground.

Creamleaf noticed. "What's wrong?" She asked, actual concern showing on here face. "You're not sick, are you?"

Horsemoon shook her head. She wondered why Creamleaf asked her if she was sick. "Wait, who's sick?" Horsemoon mouthed.

Creamleaf sighed. "Well, last night, Amberpelt started coughing. I sent her with some tansy, and I told her to come back today. I haven't seen her today, so I think that's a good sign. Let's hope it is, at least." She looked... defeated. Horsemoon has never seen her mentor look like that before.

"Are you okay?" Horsemoon mouthed.

Creamleaf looked at her, her green eyes dull. "I'm old, Horsemoon." For the first time, Horsemoon saw that she had gray fur around her muzzle; her cream fur dotted with gray. "I have to use my own herbs for my aching joints!" She broke down in a bought of coughing.

Horsemoon ushered her into the medicine den, and made her lie down in her nest. "Don't do anything. Rest. Here's some tansy." She said mutely. She gave her some tansy, and Creamleaf gladly accepted it. Finally, her eyes closed, and her breathing slowed down.

Guess I'm medicine cat for the day. Horsemoon thought, worried for her mentor. **I hope she gets better soon!** She padded out of the den, leaving Creamleaf to rest, and up into Stormstar's den.

She walked in, and he stopped talking with Crowpelt. They looked at Horsemoon expectantly. "What?" Stormstar growled. Crowpelt blinked. "Can it wait?" She asked impatiently.

Horsemoon shook her head. "Creamleaf is coughing. I made her rest, and I'm medicine cat while she's sleeping."

Stormstar scoffed. "That's no big deal. She's a medicine cat, and she past her prime, that old rabbit-brain. She should be joining StarClan

soon anyway. Maybe it's for the best." He shooed her away with his tail. "Now, go."

Horsemoon stiffly padded out of the den, unaware of the world around her. She couldn't believe what she just heard. She went into the medicine den, and saw that Amberpelt and Snakestrike were in there waiting. They looked tired. They turned around when they heard Horsemoon.

Snakestrike coughed, and Amberpelt wheezed. "Oh, there you are. We just walked in, and we're sick." She rasped.

Horsemoon's eyes widened. "That spread fast!" She mouthed. She trotted over to the herbs store, and handed them both some tansy, and catmint. They ate it gratefully.

"Go to your nests, and rest." Horsemoon ordered mutely.

The two young warriors nodded slowly and trudged our of the den. Horsemoon watched them carefully as they padded into the warrior's den. She nodded approvingly.

She spun towards Creamleaf who was still sleeping. Horsemoon leaned down and listened to the old she-cat's chest. She was wheezing, like Snakestrike and Amberpelt. She'd caught the sickness.

I hope we're not on the brink of whitecough, or even greencough! Horsemoon thought, heart pounding. **Let's hope this all goes away soon.**

Chapter 39

A few sunrises had passed, and the sickness was getting worse. More cats were getting sick, not better. Falconwing, Birdtail, Scarletnose, and Eagleeye now joined Snakestrike and Amberpelt in the medicine den. Thankfully, Creamleaf was getting better. At least she was helping with giving cats herbs.

Horsemoon sighed. She was so overworked. Her paws hurt from hurrying to and fro around the den, fetching herbs and moss and fresh-kill for every cat. What she would give for a break!

Creamleaf hurried in the den. "Stormstar's sick!"

Horsemoon heart stopped. "Let's go." She mouthed. She turned to the sick cats. She nudged Scarletnose on the shoulder. "We will be right back. You're in charge." She said mutely and slowly.

Scarletnose nodded, eyes glazed. Horsemoon wasn't even sure that she understood what she'd said.

Horsemoon and Creamleaf padded out of the medicine den, and up into Stormstar's den. They could feel the fever radiating off of the leader as they entered. Stormstar's legs were splayed out and he was panting. He turned his gaze to the medicine cats. Then he twitched, and was still.

Horsemoon stiffened. "I-is he dead?" She mouthed to Creamleaf.

"He's lost a life." Creamleaf croaked back. She kept her eyes on her leader, and suddenly he popped up.

Stormstar looked completely fine, and the fever was gone. He wasn't panting, or wheezing. But his eyes were wild.

"This sickness," He whispered. "this sickness is worse than we're ever seen. We need help."

Creamleaf gasped. "What?" She moved closer to the shaky leader.

"It's just whitecough, right?"

Stormstar shook his head. "It's worse than greencough. Any cat that has it is almost destined for death. We need help. Not from any clan," he added as Creamleaf opened her mouth to ask. "From-from..."

Horsemoon leaned over. Her heart skipped in anticipation.

Creamleaf nudged him. "From who?" She muttered.

Stormstar sighed. "From kittypets."

Creamleaf was silent. "*What*?"

Horsemoon could hardly believe her ears. WindClan, the best clan out of the four clans, asking for help from *kittypets*?! That was completely mouse-brained!

Stormstar nodded sadly. "'The one who comes on wings knows the answer.'"

Horsemoon and Creamleaf looked at each other in confusion. "What does that mean?" Creamleaf asked.

Stormstar shrugged. "I don't know. But I think it's a prophecy."

Creamleaf rolled her eyes. Horsemoon knew why. She felt the same way. StarClan never actually told them what they needed to do. It was always riddles. Was StarClan tormenting them? Did they like watching them wonder about words like cows tromping around grass?

Stormstar looked straight at Horsemoon. Was that *fear* she saw in his eyes? That moment of uncertainty flickered away in half a second. Then it was replaced by his fierce manner. "You need to go to the Twolegplace. You and Creamleaf, Horsemoon. Find the cure. Find the one 'who comes on wings.' Get help."

Horsemoon was shocked. "U-us?" She mouthed.

Stormstar dipped his head. "Yes. You are our medicine cats."

Creamleaf sniffed. "Who will take care of the sick cats while we're gone?" She challenged.

Stormstar came back with equal amount. "We will ask the other clans." He retorted.

Horsemoon knew that Stormstar completely *hated* asking other clans for help. He thought that it was a sign of weakness. He wouldn't allow it.

So it made since that Creamleaf would laugh. "*Ask another clan*?" She scoffed. "I've been your medicine cat since you came from RiverClan and became leader–" Horsemoon forgot that Creamleaf already knew about Stormstar's half-clan origins. That's why she wasn't surprised when Stormstar announced that he was from another clan. "–and I know what you're like. You would *never* ask another clan for help."

Stormstar's fur bristled. "Listen to me, old cat. You *will* go to the Twolegplace and find the answer. I can kill you right now if I wanted you. You wouldn't be able to fight me back anyway; you're past your prime, Creamleaf. StarClan's calling you soon, and maybe going to the Twolegplace will be the last thing you do for the clan before you leave!" He slid his claws out, and a growl formed deep in his throat.

If Creamleaf was threatened or scared, she didn't show it. Her calm posture remained, and she looked at Stormstar evenly. "When do we leave?"

"Tomorrow."

Chapter 40

The next sunrise, Horsemoon was jostled awake by Stormstar.

"Creamleaf is already awake. She has traveling herbs. Go now," He meowed quietly.

Horsemoon yawned and stretched. She padded silently over to Creamleaf, who was by the fresh-kill pile. She had two herbs bundles by her feet. She turned as she saw Horsemoon and Stormstar approach.

She pushed Horsemoon one of the bundles. "Eat these. They'll help us with the trip." Then she and Stormstar put their heads together and talked.

Horsemoon ate the herbs, and screwed up her face as the bitter juices sank into her tongue. She swallowed by the taste still remained. **It'll wash away later.** She thought. **We'll find water somewhere.**

By that time, Creamleaf and Stormstar were going talking. Stormstar nodded to them both, then padded into his den.

Creamleaf turned to Horsemoon. "Let's go."

The two she-cats walked out of the camp entrance, and into the moor.
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"**How** many lives does Stormstar have left?" Horsemoon mouthed. The two of them were on the open mood, eating prey that they caught. They sat next to a little puddle, and ate in the intense sun. It was sunhigh now.

Creamleaf twitched her ear. "Only medicine cats can know this, so don't tell anyone." She eyed Horsemoon fiercely. Horsemoon nodded. "Good. He only has one left."

Horsemoon wished that she could gasp. Only *one*? He didn't look like it. He was so proud, and regal. Usually leaders looked frail on their last life. Stormstar didn't.

Creamleaf nodded, understanding Horsemoon's surprise. "Yes. He doesn't look like it though, does he?" She chuckled, swallowing a piece of her rabbit.

Horsemoon bobbed her head vigorously. "He looks like a new leader!" She said silently.

Creamleaf smiled in agreement. "He does." She took the last bite of her rabbit, and Horsemoon was already finished. "I think it's time we leave."

She stood up stiffly, and Horsemoon heard her moan very softly, almost inaudible to any cat. Horsemoon wondered if she could even make the trip.

Horsemoon rose too, and took a few laps of the puddle. She licked her lips, relishing the taste of the sweet water, wondering when she'd taste it again.

The medicine cats started trekking again, and talked about the prophecy and it's meaning.

"'The one who comes on wings?' What can that mean?" Creamleaf asked herself.

Horsemoon shrugged. "Dunno," She mouthed.

Creamleaf eyed her annoyingly. "Thanks for the help," she said sarcastically.

Horsemoon beamed. "You're welcome!" She said mutely.

Creamleaf rolled her eyes playfully. Horsemoon could see the good humor in her green gaze.

They kept padding on the grass, and they soon entered RiverClan territory.

"I hope we don't meet a patrol." Creamleaf meowed. "I know they wouldn't hurt medicine cats, because we're doing something for our clan, but it would take a long time away from the day. We can't risk any time gone. Cats maybe dying in WindClan!"

Horsemoon realized with a chill that Creamleaf was right. What if some cat was dying, or dead back at camp? She wasn't there to help!

They speed up, hoping to pass without being confronted.

They passed RiverClan territory without any trouble, luckily. Then they entered ThunderClan territory.

"If we get stopped now," Creamleaf said, exasperated. "It'll take *moons* for us to get past!"

Horsemoon laughed silently, and soon they were in the trees. They padded as quietly and as quickly as they could with the leaves and undergrowth.

Creamleaf was staring at the top of the trees, then looked down with a hiss of frustration. "I can't see what time of day it is with all of these trees!"

Horsemoon nodded in agreement. It was hard to see the sky. She wondered how ThunderClan cats knew what time of day it was.

Creamleaf bounced a little as they saw the border to get out of ThunderClan territory and head straight to the Twolegplace.

We are going to make it! Horsemoon's heart soared.

Suddenly, the bushes rustled behind them. They turned, eyes wide.

"What are *you* doing here?"

Chapter 41

Creamleaf and Horsemoon narrowed their eyes, and peered into the bushes. The trees covering the sky didn't give very much light.

"I know you!" A voice hissed from behind. The medicine cats whirled around. Horsemoon recognized Stumpcloud from Gatherings. Her white and brown pelt rippled with muscles, and she was clearly the leader of the patrol.

Behind Horsemoon and Creamleaf, other cats emerged from the bushes. Horsemoon turned and saw Crushmoon, Beestripe, Leafwind, and Quickpaw.

Horsemoon smiled weakly at Quickpaw, who avoided her gaze and shuffled his paws. Her smile faded. **What's he so edgy about?** She wondered.

"Yeah," Crushmoon growled. "She's the one who killed Hazeclaw!"

Horsemoon opened her mouth to correct him, but Creamleaf objected for her. "She didn't kill him! She was trying to *help*, unlike you!"

Beestripe huffed. "Why can't she speak for herself, medicine cat? Are you her mother?"

Creamleaf stepped back.

Horsemoon's heart dropped. She was about to tap Creamleaf with her tail, but hesitated. That would have to be a question for later.

"Well," Crushmoon demanded. "what are you doing on our territory?"

"Medicine cat business." Creamleaf retorted. Horsemoon smiled slightly. The medicine cat's fiery returned. "We're just passing

through. So please let us through!"

"Okay," Stumpcloud reasoned. Horsemoon's heart lifted. **Finally, a cat has sense!** She thought. "But..."

Creamleaf and Horsemoon stiffened. "But what?" Creamleaf mewed.

Stumpcloud smiled her evil smile. She pointed at Horsemoon with her tail. "I have to hear her talk."

Horsemoon staggered. Creamleaf had to steady her. "She can't!" Blurted Creamleaf in defense. "She's mute!"

Stumpcloud looked smug. "Exactly."

"Let us through!" Creamleaf yowled, her fury making her claws slide out.

Beestripe sighed from behind. "I guess you can't get through. The warrior code says challenge any trespassing cats, and since you can't do what we want," he stopped for suspense. "we have to challenge you." He looked at Stumpcloud, who nodded. Then, they leaped.

Horsemoon was knocked over from a blow to the back of the head. She landed on her back, and she turned to see Crushmoon above her. "Medicine cat or not," he snarled. "You're trespassing!" He reared up on his hind legs, and brought them down on her head. Luckily, Horsemoon moved away just in time, and his paws hit the ground.

Horsemoon stood up quickly, stumbling because of no balance. **This stupid leg!** She thought. She cursed under her breath. **I can't even stand up right!**

She heard an *oof!* behind her as Creamleaf was jumped on. Stumpcloud and Beestripe were tackling her, landing blows on her back and spine. Creamleaf was struggling to protect herself.

With that moment of observing her clanmate, Horsemoon lost

precious time to attack, and was barreled into by Crushmoon. Horsemoon flew, and landed suddenly into a tree. Her head spun, and she was seeing stars.

Crushmoon was slithering closer, his grin filled with malice. Horsemoon's heart thudded in her chest, and she was sure that every cat fighting could hear it.

Crushmoon was right in front of Horsemoon, his breath bathing her muzzle. Horsemoon almost gagged, it was so nasty and full of squirrel scent. He raised his paw high above her head, and Horsemoon watched as he laughed.

"I told you we challenge trespassing cats!" He looked into her eyes. "Now you can watch other cats trespass in StarClan!" Crushmoon started to bring his paw down and Horsemoon squeezed her eyes shut. She knew what was coming. She'd heard of the death blow many times, but she never thought that she'd experience it.

A few moments went by, and Horsemoon isn't feel the blow. She opened her eyes, hear heart literally hurting her body as it pounded so hard.

She looked at Crushmoon, who had a look of horror on his face. He was staring at the ground, his eyes stretched wide.

Horsemoon followed his gaze, and saw a sickening sight. Black fur was motionless on the ground. **Wha...** Horsemoon was confused. Creamleaf didn't have black fur. But...

No! Horsemoon swallowed back tears. Quickpaw gave his life for hers. Horsemoon rushed over to him, and Crushmoon didn't even try to stop her.

She crouched down to the apprentice, and found his face. His eyes were closed. **He's gone!** She wailed inwardly, and she let the tears fall.

Suddenly, his brown eyes fluttered open. He squinted at her, like she was far away. Then they widened as he realized who it was.

"Go!" He croaked. "Run, now!" Then his head flopped down, and his eyes closed. His flanks stilled, and Horsemoon knew that he was really dead.

She rose quickly, and fled the scene. She ran out of the territory, not looking back to see if Creamleaf, or anyone else, was following.

Chapter 42

Horsemoon didn't stop running until she was way far out of ThunderClan territory. She stopped, panting, and looked around at her surroundings. She didn't recognize anything. Her heart thumping, she thought about Quickpaw. He saved her life. **The poor apprentice. He didn't have the life of a warrior like he was supposed to.** Horsemoon thought pitifully.

Then she realized with a jolt that Creamleaf wasn't there. **She can't be dead, can she?** She feared. **I can't go on without her, and my life has had a lot of death in it. I can't deal with another cat gone because of me.**

"Horsemoon?" Whispered a voice. Horsemoon whirled around to see a cream pelt emerge from the bushes. **Creamleaf?** She thought wildly.

"It's me, Creamleaf." The medicine cat came into full view, and Horsemoon's shoulders sagged with relief.

"Do you know where we are?" Horsemoon mouthed when Creamleaf padded close.

Creamleaf nodded. "We're actually really close to the Twolegplace."

"Did anyone follow you?"

"No." Creamleaf shook her head.

"Are you my mother?"

Creamleaf sucked in a breath. "No,"

"Don't lie to me."

"I'm not." Creamleaf protested. "Cinderstripe is."

Horsemoon narrowed her eyes. "We can talk about this later." She

said mutely.

Crenaleaf nodded. "We must find the Twolegplace." Then she looked at Horsemoon. "But first, we need to find some herbs for our scratches."

Horsemoon immediately felt the sting of her wounds. She hadn't cared about them because of the rush of the fight, and the running. But now they hurt badly.

They padded away in search of herbs, and soon they found some. Luckily, they found cobwebs, marigold, and tansy. They tansy didn't help very much, for it was for coughs.

Creamleaf applied the marigold and cobwebs on Horsemoon's scratches, and Horsemoon did the same to Creamleaf's.

When they were all fixed up, they sat down heavily. Horsemoon's stomach growled, and Creamleaf heard it. Horsemoon looked embarrassed as Creamleaf said, "We need food."

Horsmoon went and hunted, and brought two mice back. It was luck that she'd caught them, because they were still in the trees. She'd seen many mice, but she'd missed them all except for two. But two was better than none, so the two medicine cats ate them gratefully.

"Quickpaw saved my life by taking my deathblow that Crushmoon was doing. I owe him so much." Horsemoon mother when they finished.

Creamleaf nodded. "Leafwind fought Beestripe and Stumpcloud while I ran away. I don't know why, but they'll probably get kicked out of the clan for fighting for us."

"No," Horsemoon corrected silently, "you don't understand. Quickpaw *died.* He took the deathblow to the head. I watched him go to StarClan. He told me to run, so I did."

Creamleaf was speechless. Finally after a few heartbeats, she mewed, "That was a brave cat, that apprentice. He gave his life, his future, his clan, for you, a cat from a different clan."

Horsemoon scowled with pain. "I know already. Please stop talking about it." She said mutely.

Creamleaf nodded. She rose to her paws. "Let's go. We're almost there."

Horsemoon stood up and stretched. She followed in Creamleaf's paw steps as the medicine cat walked towards the setting sun.
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"**I** see the Twolegplace!" Creamleaf announced sometime later. It was almost completely dark, and they were tired. So the words restored the hope into their hearts.

Horsemoon looked, exhausted. She saw it to. It was a lot bigger than she expected, things bigger than the camp with weird looking roofs lined a row of them. They had a fence blocking into the green grass behind the mass of color.

"Creamleaf," Horsemoon mugged her mentor. "What are those?" She used her nose to point at the big color things.

"I don't know. But they do have monsters in them, so be careful." Creamleaf warned. "Anyway, let's sleep right here, and tomorrow we'll go into the Twolegplace, okay?" Horsemoon nodded. "Good. Now go gather leaves for nests."

Horsemoon nodded again and went in search of dead leaves for nests. When she got back with a bundle of them, they forged nests and went to sleep by the Twolegplace, hoping to find the answer inside of it tomorrow.

Chapter 43

Horsemoon blinked open her eyes. She was shivering.

It rained last night.

She stood up, and shook her pelt, flinging raindrops all over Creamleaf.

"Horsemoon!" Growled Creamleaf, her eyes bleary with sleep. "Why is it so cold?"

Horsemoon tapped Creamleaf with her nose to get her attention. "Rain," She motioned to the wet grass, and the soggy trees.

Creamleaf nodded and yawned, her jaws gaping with the effort of trying to wake up. "Let's hunt before we head out." She suggested.

Horsemoon scampered away and looked at the sky. Behind the rising sun, the gray clouds promised more rain. Horsemoon rolled her eyes. Luckily, her short pelt didn't hold much water, but it still made her paws muddy and she trudged thought the moor, face downcast.

She managed to catch a small rabbit, and she and Creamleaf shared it ungratefully. Horsemoon knew that she should have been glad that she had caught the rabbit, but right then, it felt like StarClan seemed to like to see them suffer.

"Let's go." Creamleaf growled after they finished. She rose swiftly, and they hurried to the Twolegplace to beat the rain.

The gloomy surroundings matched their attitudes. They walked heavily, their chins facing the leaves they trotted on below.

Suddenly, Creamleaf halted. "We're in!" She whispered.

Horsemoon looked around, and saw that Creamleaf was right. They were in the Twolegplace! Everything was so big, and their was

colors everywhere. There was so many smells that Horsemoon's jaws ached from being held open trying to identify them all. It was so busy; monsters speeding on Thunderpaths past then.

Horsemoon sneaked a glance at Creamleaf, who looked just as awed and scared as she looked.

Creamleaf turned to meet Horsemoon's gaze and blinked slowly. "Okay. Now all we have to do is find the one who comes on wings. Easy!"

Horsemoon rolled her eyes playfully. "Oh, yeah." She mouthed.

"And fast." Creamleaf confirmed as she stared at the sky. "The rain's coming soon."

Horsemoon have her a questioning look. "How do you know that?" She asked silently.

Creamleaf sighed. "One day."

Horsemoon nodded, knowing that her mentor wasn't in the mood to tell her more. And one day she'd find out herself anyway.

"Let's just see if we can find anything helpful." Creamleaf suggested. She padded forward uncertainly, her head swiveling side to side to decide which direction to go. Soon they were heading towards the way the monsters were coming from.

Horsemoon watched her paws as thy walked, and Creamleaf panted beside her. "It's really hot." She rasped.

Horsemoon nodded and looked at the medicine cat. She had gray fur flecks in her muzzle. Every day a new one seemed to form. She looked frailer every sunrise.

Horsemoon felt a drop of wetness in her nose. She looked up, and got another one in her eye. She blinked rapidly to clear it, and the sky began to pour down rain. Soon the two she-cats were drenched.

"Let's find shelter." Creamleaf growled, and tripped. She splashed into a puddle, and Horsemoon went to help her up. Creamleaf

refused. "I'm not an elder yet!" She said indignantly.

Horsemoon and Creamleaf searched and found nothing for shelter. Horsemoon suddenly saw something that would help, but she knew that Creamleaf would refuse. But she tried anyway.

Creamleaf followed her gaze. "We're not hiding under a monster." She protested.

Horsemoon looked at her with a pleading look. "It's the best we've got." She mouthed.

Creamleaf sniffed. "No," she turned her chin up. "I'd rather get soaking wet then hide under a momster!" She humphed.

And that's exactly what happened.

Horsemoon rested underneath the monster, that was *asleep.* Creamleaf stayed put in the rain.

"You'll get sick!" Horsemoon had mouthed.

Creamleaf sneered back. "I'm a medicine cat. I know how to treat myself!"

Horsemoon shrugged and gave up. Soon, sleep claimed her.
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Scuffling woke Horsemoon. It was still night, and it was still raining. Creamleaf was no where to be seen. Horsemoon checked everywhere, and even hauled herself out from under the monster.

Rustling and the scuffling noise came from above Horsemoon's head. She looked up and saw the outline of a cat standing on something that had lots of Twoleg things on it.

Horsemoon squinted. **Creamleaf?** She thought. But as she looked closer, she saw yellow eyes gleaming in the darkness. It wasn't Creamleaf.

And then the cat sent something hurtling down at Horsemoon. She watched it as it collided with her head, the world spun as she collapsed, and the world went black.

Chapter 44

Horsemoon's head throbbed as she awoke. She touched it gingerly, and she winced as felt fresh pain spread through her. She moaned silently.

"Arrgghh!!"

Horsemoon sat up quickly, but she instantly regretted it. The world swirled around her and her vision blurred.

"Don't hurt her!" Creamleaf's howl rang out in the silence.

"You invaded my territory!" A strange voice replied. It was a tom's voice, loud and deep.

"You didn't have to drop that- that *Twoleg* thing on her head!" Creamleaf retorted.

"It was a toolbox!" The tom shot back.

Horsemoon watched as the cats sized each other up. Their fur bristled, claws unsheathed. Horsemoon knew a fight would break out any second if she didn't do something.

So she got up carefully, and she staggered over to Creamleaf. Creamleaf turned and gasped. "You're awake! But go rest, because you hit your head pretty hard." She whirled around and faced the tom. "I'll deal with him."

"Then go ahead!" The tom spat.

Creamleaf launched herself at the tom, who was knocked over with surprise. The two cats tussled and screeched and clawed each other. Horsemoon watched with wild eyes. She scrambled over between them, and took some blows as she pushed them apart. The tom was surprisingly strong for his scrawny frame.

"Stop!" She mouthed to Creamleaf.

The tom tilted his head questionably. "Why isn't she talking?" He asked with wonder.

"She's mute," Creamleaf responded with a suspicious look at the tom.

The tom nodded and looked away.

"Now what are you guys fighting over?" Horsemoon asked silently.

Creamleaf looked at the scrawny tom. "He dropped something on you. What was it called- a what-box?"

The tom cleared his throat. "A *tool*box." He corrected. "You frightened me, that's all."

Creamleaf rolled her eyes. "Oh, well, we're sorry we *frightened* you," She said sarcastically.

If the tom heard, he ignored her. "What's your names?"

Horsemoon studied him. He was as black as the night, with a white tail tip. The fur surrounding his eyes and muzzle was white also. And his yellow gaze was almost gold.

Creamleaf's gaze flickered. Worry, maybe? Or was that fear? Horsemoon couldn't tell. "I'm Creamleaf, and this is Horsemoon." She gestured to herself and Horsemoon.

The tom hesitated. "I'm Amos," he said after a heartbeat.

Horsemoon nodded. "Amos," She mouthed.

Creamleaf remained expressionless. "Amos, we need help." She began to explain their whole situation with the prophecy and he sickness. Horsemoon was surprised that the old she-cat opened up so quickly. Amos seemed to listen carefully, though.

Amos thought about it for a moment. "A cat who comes on wings?..." he closed his eyes. Then they opened and his yellow eyes beamed. "I know a cat! His name is Frill! I can take you to him if you want!"

Creamleaf looked at him like he suggested fighting a dog by himself. "What's he got to do with the prophecy?" She demanded.

The black tom's cheerfulness remained. "He's new to the Twolegplace. He came from far away, and he came on something that flies in the air and had wings! I forgot what it was called, but when we find him, we can ask him about it, and see if he's the cat you're looking for!"

Horsemoon looked at Creamleaf and nodded. She trusted Amos. What other choice did they have?

Creamleaf sighed. "Alright. Take us to Frill." She meowed, defeated.

Amos smiled, his white teeth gleaming. "When do you want me to take you? Now?"

Creamleaf laughed. "No. Horsemoon's head is still messed up. She can't travel for a while, even though we're missing precious time saving our clanmates."

Horsemoon sat down and tried to get comfortable. She thought about the cat named Frill. And she wondered if he was the cat they were looking for. And she wondered about her clanmates at camp, and who was really sick, or something very terrible.

Was any cat dead yet?

Chapter 45

"**Time** to see Frill!" Amos's voice made Horsemoon open her eyes. She rolled over and closed them again. She didn't want to go.

Amos suddenly jumped on Horsemoon. He cuffed her on the ears, and Horsemoon's eyes sprang open. She looked at him with wide eyes and he smiled. "Creamleaf told me to," he responded.

Creamleaf looked smug. "Just like your first day of training."

Horsemoon remembered her first day of being an apprentice. She wouldn't get up, and Creamleaf cuffed her on the ears and left. Every other day after that, Horsemoon scrambled out of her nest and went to training.

Horsemoon stretched and yawned. Her belly grumbled, and the two other cats heard it. Amos grinned. "I've caught a mouse. You can have it if you want."

She peered at him with narrowed eyes, and then switched her gaze to Creamleaf, who nodded. Horsemoon looked back at Amos and bobbed her head. "Yes, please," She mouthed.

Amos whipped around and disappeared for a moment. Then her reappeared with a tiny mouse. "It's all I could find," He mumbled around the mouse.

Horsemoon took it gratefully and kept her gaze locked on Amos. **He's not so bad.** She thought. **He'd make a good warrior.** Then she dismissed the thoughts, knowing that that probably wouldn't happen. But maybe...

She munched down the mouse quickly. Then she licked her lips and rose to her paws. "I'm ready to go," She said mutely.

Amos and Creamleaf nodded. "Good." The medicine cat said. "Amos, take us to Frill." She said to Amos.

"Let's go." Amos instructed. He led the way out of the monster's house and out into the day. It was already sunhigh, they had to hurry.

"How long is this going to take?" Creamleaf asked, reading Horsemoon's mind. She padded alongside with the black and white tom.

Amos looked at the sun. "Let's see. Frill's home is on the other side of the Twolegplace... it's noon right now... so we'll be there at about, eh, nighttime?"

Creamleaf did an exasperated gasp. "We don't have that long!" Then her eyes narrowed. "What did you call 'sunhigh'?"

Amos looked confused. Then he brightened again. "Ohh. You mean noon!"

Creamleaf squinted. "Noon," She let her mouth feel the new word. "Maybe we can the Clans that."

Horsemoon did not like the new word. Sunhigh was much better.

Amos smiled. "Well, we might as well talk about something while we walk." He thought for a minute. "What's a Clan?"

Horsemoon really wanted to answer, but she knew that without experience, Amos wouldn't know what she was mouthing. So she listened as Creamleaf explained.

"A clan is a group of cats who fend for each other and take care of the oldest cats and the queens." Creamleaf began. "There's warriors, who train younger cats called apprentices to become warriors. Warriors fight battles against other clans and hunt for the clan. There–"

"How many clans are there?" Interrupted Amos.

"Four." Creamleaf continued. "We're WindClan, the best and fastest clan. ThunderClan are the strongest and bulkiest. Then there's ShadowClan, the sneakiest and the evilest. Then there's RiverClan, the rabbit-brained cats who *enjoy* swimming." She shuddered on the

last words.

Amos looked thoughtful. "Oh," He whispered. "That sounds amazing."

Creamleaf smiled slightly. "It is." She had a distant look in her eyes. She was probably thinking of the camp back home. Horsemoon was, for sure.

"There's also elders. They're the oldest cats in the clan, and they get too old to fight or hunt, so they retire to the elder's den. Warriors hunt for them, because it's their turn to take care of the clan, just like the elders did many moons ago." Crenaleaf looked at Amos. "With proper training, you'd be a warrior right now."

Amos's eyes sparkled. "Awesome,"

Creamleaf giggled. "The apprentices are younger cats. When they reach six moons, they began training as a warrior. They train for about six more moons before they reach the level of a warrior and receive their warrior name.

"Then there's queens, pregnant she -cats who are warriors and then have to go to the Nursery to have their kits. When their kits reach six moons, they either retire to the elder's den or go back to warrior duties.

"There also a deputy who the leader chooses. When the leader looses their last life, the deputy becomes leader and has to chose their own deputy. The deputy organizes patrols and talks to the leader about battles and other important things."

"How many lives does a leader have?" Amos asked.

"Nine." Creamleaf replied.

Amos looked surprised. "I thought that that was a story for little kittens!"

Creamleaf laughed. "No. It's true!"

Amos smiled and purred.

Horsemoon was happy for them, and was looking forward to the trip to find Frill.

Chapter 46

The journey to find Frill was defiantly not easy. Especially when they had to jump on fences. It was very hard for Horsemoon with only three legs.

"C'mon, Horsemoon!" Encouraged Amos at the top of the fence. Creamleaf was also with him.

Horsemoon bunched her muscles and sprang. She soared through the air but fell short. She slammed into the side of the fence and fell to the ground. She felt ashamed when she heard Amos and Creamleaf's snorts of laughter.

"Sorry!" Creamleaf called down. "It was just so funny!" She giggled a little, then shushed herself. "Try again,"

Horsemoon crouched and vowed that this time she would make it. She launched herself and fell short again. When she was falling towards the ground, she felt teeth dig into her pelt. Creamleaf and Amos were hauling her up, and soon was standing up on the fence.

"Thanks," She mouthed, wobbling.

"No problem!" Amos and Creamleaf said in unison. They looked at each other and smiled.

Horsemoon grinned sweetly. There were many reasons why they'd never be a thing. First off, Amos was as young as Horsemoon and Creamleaf was old. Secondly, Creamleaf was a medicine cat. But their friendship could remain.

"Okay," Amos said over his shoulder to Horsemoon. "We have to walk through this scary place called an alley. It sometimes has dogs, so we need to be careful."

Horsemoon swallowed. **Dogs?**

They padded along silently. Soon they came across a very dark path

in front of them with very tall sides that were black and gray. The ground felt hard and cold and the sun didn't reach inside the scary place.

Horsemoon looked around, jumping at every slight movement. She suddenly felt something brush her tail, and she yelped in surprise. She turned quickly and saw a little mouse scrambling into a brown square thing on near the side of the 'alley' as Amos called it. Horsemoon gulped and spun back to face Amos and Creamleaf's backsides. She held her tail high in the air.

"We're getting close!" Amos called back over his shoulder. Creamleaf purred and Horsemoon felt relieved.

They padded out of the 'alley', and Horsemoon was glad that she could see the sun. It was dark and cold in there, and she didn't like it one bit. Being out in the open was a WindClan cat's thing.

Horsemoon caught up to Creamleaf and Amos, who was in a hushed conversation.

"But why do you want to st-" Amos was whispering. He saw Horsemoon and straightened up, smiling. "Hi, Horsemoon, " he greeted her. He nudged Creamleaf with his forepaw and she stood up straight as well.

"What was that about?" Horsemoon mouthed.

She knew that Amos and Creamleaf saw it, but they pretended to not see her lips move.
"Well," Amos changed the subject. "Horsemoon, how did you lose your leg and become mute? Or were you born that way?"

Horsemoon felt uncomfortable about the subject, so she let Creamleaf explain. The whole time, Horsemoon grimaced and Amos nodded in understanding. When Creamleaf finished, Horsemoon was almost in tears. But she held them back, not wanting to look weak to Amos.

Amos looked at Horsemoon, sympathy brimming his yellow eyes. "I'm sorry," He meowed. He was speaking the truth.

Horsemoon nodded. If she could speak, the knot in her throat would prevent her from talking. But she couldn't talk anyway.

Horsemoon padded in silence this time, Amos and Creamleaf whispering in hushed voices. It was okay that she wasn't being talked to; she preferred the silence to dwell on her thoughts.

They walked along the side of the Thunderpath, pelts ruffled as monsters streamed by them. One time a monster splashed in a puddle, causing the dirty water to spray all over the traveling cats. Horsemoon and Creamleaf hated the water, but Amos didn't seem to mind.

"This happens a lot," He'd mewed.

Horsemoon and Creamleaf had rolled their eyes.

Soon they approached a huge mound of hard, brightly colored pieces of bigger objects, their shiny coats gleaming when the sun hit them.

"What's that?" Creamleaf asked Amos.

Amos cleared his throat. "This is the junkyard. It's where dead monsters go." Seeing the medicine cat's' worried faces, he added, "Don't worry; they're not going to hurt you,"

They padded cautiously on the mound, with Horsemoon tripping on the monsters. The junkyard was stinky, and smelly. Horsemoon knew it was because of the rotting monster carcasses.

"Here we are!" Amos announced, using his tail to motion to a huge pile of monster pieces. It was extremely large, and had weird smells radiating off of it. With a jolt, Horsemoon realized that it was *cat* smells. Did cats live in dead monsters?!

"They live in there." Amos explained, pointing with his forepaw at the immense mound. "We just have to get in there. And that's tricky because you have to *earn* your way in."

Horsemoon and Creamleaf looked at each other. Creamleaf opened her mouth to ask a question when a cat raced out of the mound. His

green eyes were wide as he panted in front of them.

"Help!" He cried. "A cat has hurt it's leg and can't move! We need help! He's going to die!"

Chapter 47

Horsemoon looked at Creamleaf with wild eyes. "We gotta help!" She mouthed.

Creamleaf nodded and turned to the tom. "Take us to it."

The cat dipped his head. "Thank you." He looked uncertain. "Do you know what you're doing?"

"Yes," Creamleaf answered.

The cat took Creamleaf, Horsemoon, and Amos inside the mound. Horsemoon was amazed as they hurried through a tunnel in the monster rubble. The inside of the mound was *hollow*! Cats were everywhere; eating, sleeping, nursing kits, gossiping... it was like a clan.

But where most of the cats were was near the back of the mound. They were in a rugged circle around something with a white pelt.

Horsemoon and the others made it over to the circle. They squeezed past crying cats and made it to the middle.

Horsemoon's heart dropped. **Great StarClan, it's a kit!**

The white pelted creature was a small cat. It's beautiful snow white fur was coated with blood near one back leg. It's pitiful wails were heart wrenching.

"Please help!" He croaked. "It hurts!"

Horsemoon crouched near him. "What's your name?" She mouthed.

The kit processed her lip movements for a heartbeat. "My name? It's Scrap," He meowed painfully.

Horsemoon nodded. "Okay, Scrap, Creamleaf and I are going to try to fix your leg. It's going to hurt, but I need you to be strong and

brave for us, okay?" She soothed mutely.

Scrap shut his eyes tightly. "Okay," he agreed softly.

Horsemoon motioned for Creamleaf, who inspected at the kit's leg. She looked up at Horsemoon and whispered, "It's defiantly broken,"

Horsemoon nodded. "I know. Let's just try to... ugh..." she said silently and squinted from uncertainty.

Creamleaf leaned forward. "We need to try to set it." She finished.

Horsemoon bobbed her head. "Yes. We need a stick so he can bite on, and another stick to as a splint for the leg. And cobwebs." She mouthed, guessing.

Creamleaf smiled. "Yes. Exactly." She grabbed two cats by their legs, and instructed them to find sticks and cobwebs. They set off quickly out of the mound.

Horsemoon took a deep breath. She looked at Scrap who's flanks were moving up and down unevenly. **They need to hurry back!** She thought worriedly.

Creamleaf soothed Scrap while they waited. Soon, that cats came back with cobwebs and sticks. Then the medicine cats got to work.

Horsemoon handed Scrap the stick, and he took it gratefully. Creamleaf said something to him in hushed words and he took a deep, raggedy breath and nodded to her, who gave a small smile.

"We're ready to set the leg," She meowed to Horsemoon.

Creamleaf carefully took the leg, and put her paws on it. "Ready, Scrap?"

The kit nodded.

Creamleaf pulled the leg, and set the bone back in place. Scrap screamed, and bit the stick so hard that it splintered. It was over quickly, and his cries only lasted a moment. Horsemoon handed her the longer stick and she set it against the broken leg. Then she

wrapped it in cobwebs.

Scrap looked up, his brown eyes shining. Behind the happiness, they were glazed with pain, but he was beaming. "Thank you!" He cried, attempting to muzzle the medicine cats.

Horsemoon smiled and felt her heart swell with pride. She helped this kit!

She nuzzled Scrap back, and he licked her. "It feels better already!" He lied.

Horsemoon chuckled on the inside. He was a good-hearted cat.

"Thank you for helping my son," a voice said behind them. They turned and saw a gray tom with tan stripes and blue eyes.

"Who are you?" Creamleaf asked.

The tom smiled. "I'm Frill."

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"**So,** how do you come on wings?" Creamleaf questioned. It was after they explained why they were looking for him, and what he knew about healing.

"I'm from far away," Frill explained. "I came on a plane that flies in the sky. It had two wings and it was high in the air."

"'The one who comes on wings.' Perfect!" Creamleaf murmured. "Now what do you know about sick cats and coughs?"

"My owner's a vet. He helps sick animals. Sometime I go to work with him, and he gives them something called medicine. I don't have any of that there, but sometimes he uses this flower called a Camilla." Frill meowed. Horsemoon has no idea about what he was saying except that he knew how to heal sick cats. "I go here every year on vacation, and it just so happens that I brought some with me! I'll go get it; you deserve it after all that you've done." He padded away into the crowd of cats.

Creamleaf and Horsemoon smiled. Amos stood there awkwardly.

Horsemoon forgot that he was there. "Are you going to tell her?" He asked Creamleaf.

"What?" Horsemoon mouthed, her heart pounding.

Creamleaf looked up, sadness brimming her green eyes. "I-I've decided to stay with Amos and Frill."

Horsemoon tilted her head in confusion.

Creamleaf eyes filled with tears. "I'm not going back to the clans, Horsemoon. I want to stay and live here. I'm sorry,"

Horsemoon felt dizzy. She couldn't comprehend what Creamleaf was saying. But she did know one thing: her life would never be the same again.

Chapter 48

"**Goodbye,** Horsemoon!" Cats called and waved their tails in goodbye. She'd stayed one day and then decided that she needed to go. Frill gave her lots of the flowers to make sure that every cat would heal. She thanked him, and couldn't wait to tell the clan about him.

"Goodbye, Horsemoon. Thanks for helping me!" Scrap mustered. He limped over and hugged her. Horsemoon enjoyed every moment as she hugged him back. **Creamleaf will look after him.** She assured herself.

She said goodbye to Amos, and she thanked him for leading them there. "Bye, Amos!" She mouthed, and nuzzled him. **He would have made a fine warrior.** She thought wistfully.

Amos nodded and stepped back.

Horsemoon resented the next goodbye. "Bye, Creamleaf," She said mutely. She was actually glad that she couldn't speak because she didn't want to let her mentor hear the tremor in her voice. "I hoped that you could come back."

Creamleaf chuckled. "Me too. But I'm old, and I want to help cats here. Plus, WindClan will have an amazing medicine cat in my place." She nuzzled her apprentice, and Horsemoon breathed in her mentor's scent one last time.

"I'll miss you," Horsmoon mouthed regretfully. She smiled sadly, and Creamleaf winked and turned away. She padded away with Amos and Frill and followed by a limping Scrap.

Horsemoon watched as her world tumbled. She wondered if the day could get any worse. She trudged out of the mound with the flowers in her mouth. She remembered the way out of the Twolegplace, and after a while of walking, she made it out. She was on the way back to the clan with the cure for the sickness.

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Horsemoon stopped in WindClan territory to rest. She'd been walking all day, and thankfully she'd made it out of rival clan territories without trouble. Passing through ThunderClan territory brought back a fresh wave of pain for Quickpaw and Leafwind. She'd hunted a small rabbit, and ate it swiftly. She rested until nightfall and began to pad back to camp.

When she entered the camp, the weight of homesickness that she never knew that she had, lifted off of her shoulders. There was no cat in camp, and she realized that no cat was on guard. She hurried into the medicine den and was shocked to see so many cats in there. Every one of her nests was filled up with coughing cats, and she was even more surprised to see Rosepelt, the ThunderClan medicine cat.

Rosepelt turned and her face brightened. "Horsemoon!" She cried, racing to her, and avoiding sick cats. "Did you find the cure?"

Horsemoon stopped back. "How do you know about this? Why are you here?" She mouthed.

Rosepelt cleared her throat. "Stormstar called me to help with the sick cats while you were gone. It's gotten worse and"- she sighed -"Snakestrike, Scarletnose, and Soilnose have all succumbed to the sickness."

Horsemoon lowered her head in shame. She took too long and now some of her clanmates were dead.

"I got the flowers." She mouthed after a moment. "And we came treat every cat now. But first," she added, "take me to Stormstar,"

Rosepelt nodded and lead Horsemoon through the maze of ill cats. Soon they made it to the best that contained Stormstar. The leader looked so weak, every rib sticking out of his pelt. His gray fur was ruffled from lack of grooming, and his eye were full.

"Horsemoon," He rasped. "You're back. But where's Creamleaf?"

Rosepelt looked at Horsemoon. "Oh, yeah. Where is she?"

Horsemoon stares at her paws. Then she let the story spill. Stormstar looked sad, and Rosepelt shook her head regretfully. "She was always the cat who cared for more than herself," she muttered.

Stormstar squinted. "Give the flowers to the other cats first. They only have one life to lose."

Horsemoon mouthed in protest, "But so do you!"

Stormstar sighed ruggedly. "I have died eight times. One more will be my last, just like everyone else." Seeing the medicine cats' distressed faces, he coughed, "It's okay. If there's any flowers left, I will eat them,"

Horsemoon nodded, and gave some flowers to Rosepelt. Then they set off to work quickly, coaxing cats to eat the flowers. Every cat hat Horsemoon helped, seemed happier to know that she was home.

Soon, every cat was given some of the flowers, except Stormstar. They padded back to him to give him the flowers.

"We got extra, Storm– oh..." Rosepelt began. The leader wasn't breathing. His eyes were closed, flanks still. A smile was on his lips, and Horsemoon's heart broke. He was an amazing leader; he gave his last life for other cats. That takes great bravery. She let the tears fall, and she soon fell asleep to her sobbing and Rosepelt's soothing.

Chapter 49

"**Wake** up, Horsemoon!" Hissed a voice. Horsemoon's eyes fluttered open, blurry with sleep. It was sunrise, she saw the sun peaking over the trees. Why was she awake that early? She wasn't a warrior, she didn't have to go on dawn patrols.

It was Crowpelt. The she-cat looked terrible, her black fur clinging on to her bony frame. She was one of the cats who were very sick, but made an amazing recovery with the flower, and was better. But she was still ill.

"What are you doing up this early?" She mouthed to Crowpelt.

Crowpelt coughed. "You've got to take me to the Moonstone."

Suddenly, the memories of last night and the last few days flooded into Horsemoon's mind. She fell back down, and closed her eyes. "I don't wanna go,"

Crowpelt made a noise kind of like a sigh. "I know, but the clan's weak and leaderless. We've got to go now, before the night hits the stone." She hesitated. "Have you ever been to the Moonstone? I mean, I've never seen Creamleaf take you there..."

Horsmoon immediately opened her eyes. She was right. Creamleaf *had* never taken her! How would she know which way to go?

She stood stiffly, feeling like Creamleaf. The memory of her mentor leaving hurt her too much, so she dismissed it.

"I don't know where it is," she admitted to the deputy.

Crowpelt frowned and then coughed. "It's okay. Creamleaf never took you because she thought you were going to be a warrior, so what was the point? She also thought that you weren't ready, but now she doesn't get to show you..." she trailed off awkwardly.

Horsemoon was awed about why Creamleaf never took her to the

Moonstone. She just always thought that she forgot to take her. But she was still mad. If she had went, she could have predicted so many accidents. And that Creamleaf would stay in the Twolegplace. She could have asked her to come back to the clan. But now Creamleaf was gone forever.

They exited the camp and stopped. **Which way next?** She looked both ways and sneaked a peek at Crowpelt. She looked annoyed even in her fragile state.

Horsemoon looked at the sky and the sun. It was beating down on their pelts like a hawk on its prey. She squinted. Suddenly, a wind picked up, blowing cool air on the two she-cats. Horsmoon closed her eyes, letting the cold air blow through her fur.

"Go follow you're heart... it'll lead you to it..."

Creamleaf's voice rang in her ears. Horsemoon opened her eyes, and the voice stopped. She smiled.

Crowpelt's jaws were agape. She turned to Horsemoon, yellow eyes wide. "You heard that too, right?" She whispered.

Horsemoon nodded. They started off towards ShadowClan territory and Horsemoon knew she was going the right way because she felt it in her heart. Creamleaf might have left her to be in the Twolegplace, but her mentor will be in Horsemoon's heart to guide her through tough times.

They padded towards the Highstones at a steady pace. Crowpelt and Horsemoon didn't even need to stop; their curiosity to see the Moonstone was feeding them.

Crowpelt was the first to start panting. It was a very hot day. Since she was still sickly, Horsemoon was worried. She asked repeatedly if they needed to stop, but Crowpelt always refused, saying that making it to the Moonstone was more important than her health.

"Well," Horsemoon retorted silently, "we can't go to the Moonstone if you die! The clan has no deputy or leader! Who would lead the clan?"

Crowpelt nodded and coughed. "I'm okay," She croaked, then she hesitated. "Who do you think will make a good deputy?"

Horsemoon was caught by surprise. The future leader actually looked unsure. Horsemoon had always known Crowpelt to be a strong she-cat, not wanting to accept help. She was independent and she never asked for other cat's opinion. "Maybe... Frogclaw?" She mouthed.

Crowpelt's eyes brightened. "Yes," She whispered. "He's smart and loyal. He's perfect,"

Horsemoon turned and smiled. She knew it! Crowpelt *did* secretly have a crush on Frogclaw! Deputy and leader mates. Perfect.

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"**We** found it!" Horsemoon exclaimed silently. They were at the Highstones, standing in front of Mothermouth.

Crowpelt grinned, her old self coming back. "I knew we'd make it."

Horsemoon noticed that the sun was going down. They'd have to wait next to Mothermouth until it was time. So she collapsed, legs weary from the journey. Crowpelt laid down, a sigh escaping her as her belly fur hit the stone.

Horsemoon looked up. How would she know when it was time to go in?

"Go in when the moon touched the tip of the Highstones... that means it's time..."

Creamleaf's voice came back. Horsemoon exchanged a glance with Crowpelt, who had a small smile in her face. Horsemoon returned it, and she knew that she wasn't alone.

Chapter 50

"**Let's** go," Horsemoon mouthed, rising to her paws. She arched her back in a stretch as Crowpelt rose stiffly. They padded cautiously into Mothermouth. Horsemoon forced her fur to lay flat, and she tried to contain that she was afraid. She didn't want Crowpelt to smell her fear; she was the medicine cat so she was supposed to know what she was doing.

The tunnel was dark, so the she-cats had to use their whiskers to guide them. Horsemoon could barely breathe; she was feeling claustrophobic. But she was no kit. She wasn't afraid of everything.

Soon they entered a small cavern. It was still dark. "Where's the Moonstone?" Crowpelt asked. Horsemoon was a little worried herself. She didn't see it. Was the whole trip for nothing?

Suddenly, the moon shone through a jagged hole in the roof. Its glow landed on a tall stone in the middle. It instantly lit up, shooting colors everywhere. Crowpelt and Horsemoon had to turn to avoid being blinded.

They turned back hesitantly, and Crowpelt gasped. It was beautiful. The Moonstone was an assortment of blues, whites, yellows, and every other color. **This is one of the joys of being a medicine cat.** Horsemoon thought.

"Now we touch our noses to it," Crowpelt explained softly. They padded up to it, and Crowpelt touched her nose to it. She laid down, and her eyes closed. Her dreams were beginning. Horsemoon followed her actions, scared. She touched it with her nose and was shocked how cold it was. She shivered and tucked her paws underneath her. She shut her eyes and was immediately taken to another world.

She was standing in a clearing. It wasn't anywhere in WindClan territory or any other clan territory. Horsemoon smiled, knowing that she made it.

Horsemoon turned and saw Crowpelt. She was twitching her tail nervously and her fur was standing up. Crowpelt looked at Horsemoon, her yellow eyes gleaming with fear.

"Don't worry, Crowpelt," Horsemoon soothed. She still wasn't used to her voice that she had in StarClan. "It's okay."

Crowpelt's mouth opened. "Y-You can talk!"

Horsemoon nodded and smiled. She was about to reply when a noise came from up ahead. They switched their gazes and saw a cat emerge from the bushes.

"Only in StarClan can she speak." Stormstar meowed.

Crowpelt was astonished, not moving. "Stormstar," she breathed with wonder.

Stormstar smiled, his gray pelt filled with stars. There were joy and laughter in his eyes, something that Horsemoon knew was missing when she returned with the flowers. His pelt was sleek, and he was standing up taller. He was muscular, looking like a young warrior. He wasn't the weak and frail cat she saw on his last life.

Horsemoon cleared her throat. "Stormstar," she greeted, leaning down in a bow of respect.

Stormstar shook his head. "No, Horsemoon. Stand up." He protested. He looked her over. "You've grown into a fine medicine cat." He looked at his paws. "I'm sorry for what I did to you when I was leader."

Horsemoon sighed. "You're forgiven. Thank you for what you've done. I thought being a medicine cat would be terrible, but I'm glad I became one. It is my duty to protect my clan."

Stormstar nodded. "I knew you'd love it."

More cats streamed into the clearing. There were lines of starry cats of every rank and clan.

Horsemoon leaned towards Crowpelt. "It's your leader ceremony!"

She whispered.

Crowpelt nodded but said nothing.

Stormstar raised his muzzle to the sky. "Today is an important day. The making of a new leader is always a wonder." He padded up to Crowpelt. "With this life, I give you courage." He touched his nose to Crowpelt's head. "Use it to stand up for what's right."

Crowpelt jerked and shut her eyes tightly. She dug her claws into the ground, tipping the grass. She started shaking for a heartbeat, then opened her eyes. There was determination in them.

Another cat stepped out of the ranks. Her hazel pelt shone, and she looked like a new warrior, not the elder she used to be. Hazelpelt stopped in front of Crowpelt. "With this life," She began. "I give you love." She touched her nose to Crowpelt's head. "Use it to love your clan, even when one disobeys you." Crowpelt had the same reaction as the other life touched her. Soon it was over and another cat came forward.

The young warrior came up to Crowpelt. He smiled his toothy grin and nuzzled her. "Hi, Crowpelt." Snakestrike meowed.

Horsemoon heart ached for the young warrior. He never really had the life every cat wanted. He died too early, but now he had the privilege to give life to a leader.

Crowpelt returned the greeting. "Snakestrike," she dipped her head.

Snakestrike looked at her, his blue eyes soft. "I give you the life of patience. Use it for when times get tough." He touched his nose to Crowpelt's head. She shuddered, and closed her eyes, facing towards her paws.

Another cat padded forward. Horsemoon immediately felt anger when she saw him, but it ebbed away to sympathy.

"Barktooth!" Crowpelt hissed. "Traitor!"

Barktooth hung his head. "I am sorry for betraying the clan. But now I am here." He looked up, and Horsemoon saw hope in his

eyes. "With this life, I give you compassion." He touched his nose to her head. "Use it to forgive cats even when they make a grave mistake. That is one thing I've learned in my time." He stepped back, and watched as Crowpelt crumbled under pain.

A small cat came forward, and Horsemoon gasped. She felt pain in her heart as she saw the cat who saved her life. Quickpaw smiled and slowly approached Crowpelt.

Crowpelt's hackles raised, and she bared her teeth. She knew that he smelled like another clan, so she was wary.

"Don't worry," Horsemoon hissed. "He's friendly."

Crowpelt nodded and swallowed nervously. What could a cat from a different clan give her?

Quickpaw cleared his throat. "I'm Quickpaw. I gave my life for Horsemoon and Creamleaf when they were attacked by a ThunderClan patrol while on their journey to the Twolegplace." Crowpelt exchanged a worried look with Horsemoon. Horsemoon sucked in a breath, knowing that she forgot to tell Crowpelt about it. "I give you a life for loyalty." He touched his nose to her head. "Be loyal to you're clan, but save others when there's no point in bloodshed." Crowpelt jerked and spasmed. Then she was still.

He stepped back, and a new cat came forward. Horsemoon couldn't suppress a cry of anguish. Crowpelt couldn't either.

"Whiteheart!" She gasped, nuzzling her mother. Whiteheart's death was extremely hard on Crowpelt, being part of her oldest litter.

Whiteheart smiled. She padded up to her kit and sighed. "I miss you." She breathed. "Anyway, with this life, I give you understanding. Use it for realizing that every cat in the clan has an important role." She touched her daughter's head and Crowpelt shuddered and closed her eyes.

Another cat walked up. Why did every cat that Horsemoon saw hurt her heart?

"Redkit!" Horsemoon cried. She felt the tears roll down her face,

and she realized just how much she missed him.

"Horsemoon!" He replied. He nuzzled her, and whispered, "Stormstar told me that it was to become a warrior, my name would be—"

"Redkit," Stormstar warned. "You're here to give a life to Crowpelt, remember?"

Redkit smiled. "Sorry," he giggled. Horsemoon noticed how small he was. He'd never grow up. He'd always be a kit.

He padded up to Crowpelt. He grinned. "Hi." Then he shook his head. "Getting distracted," he muttered under his breath. "Crowpelt," He turned suddenly serious. "I give you a life for wisdom." Crowpelt had to crouch down to let the kit touch her head. "Use it to make choices that wouldn't harm other cats." Crowpelt had the same reaction as the other lives given to her. But this time, she was getting weaker. Horsemoon could tell.

Another cat stepped out of the ranks. It was Scarletnose. She sighed happily and looked at Crowpelt. "Whiteheart was my best friend. And when you were born, I knew you'd do great things." She motioned to everything around them. "And look at you now! You're going to be the leader of WindClan!" She chuckled. "With this life, Crowpelt, I give you motherly love." She touched her nose to Crowpelt's forehead. "Use it to love your clan like a mother loves her kits."

Crowpelt's reaction was worse than the others. This life looked more painful than other lives. So when she collapsed on the ground, it made sense for Horsemoon to help her up.

Crowpelt refused. "I can do this," she said through gritted teeth. She stood up shakily and took a deep breath. "I'm ready," She whispered.

"This is your last life to receive." Stormstar meowed. "It will hurt the most,"

Crowpelt nodded solemnly.

A cat came forward that Horsemoon or Crowpelt had ever seen. The she-cat looked important though.

"I'm Petalpelt." She mewed. "I was a medicine cat before Creamleaf and I was her mentor." She hesitated. "I died because of grief for not saving a cat."

Horsemoon's eyes widened. She remembered Creamleaf telling her about Petalpelt!

Crowpelt's eyes widened. "You're a legend!"

Petalpelt nodded. "I was. And now you will be." She smiled. "With this life, I give you strength. Use it for the strength to protect your clan, but if one thing bad happens, don't remain on it. Clan life goes on. Remember that." She touched her nose to Crowpelt's black fur.

Crowpelt hissed in pain, and dug her claws into the grass, ruining it. It was the worst pain yet. When it was over, she opened her eyes. They were brilliantly bright yellow, and she looked nothing like the sick she-cat she was when they traveled to the Moonstone. Her pelt was sleek and glossy, and her shoulders rippled underneath her fur. She looked like a cat from LionClan.

Stormstar bowed, and so did the remaining cats. "You are now Crowstar." He licked her forehead. "Go, lead our clan!"

The other cats started to fade. "Crowstar! Crowstar! Crowstar...!" they cheered and soon StarClan disappeared into nothingness.

Horsemoon awoke next to Crowstar. The leader looked fierce. She smiled and rose quickly to her paws. "Let's go, Horsemoon. We will serve our clan for many moons yet." And then they padded out of the Moonstone, and Horsemoon finally understood that her path as a medicine cat was the right choice.

Dedications

I'd like to thank my sister, who doesn't have Wattpad, for reading my book and listening to my plans for it. I don't really care if she actually listened, I just cared that she would let me spill it all out to her!

Thanks, Sis!

I also want to thank all of the readers of my book, but it would take too long to name them all. But I want them to know that I appreciate them very much!!!

Thanks, readers!!!

~Author's Note~

Guys. We finally finished the book!!!!!!!!!!! Ahhhhh!!!! It took months to write this, and it paid off!!!!

This book has the most reads of all of my books combined!!!!!! Thank you all so much for reading this, voting on it, and commenting!!!!!! I cannot say thank you enough!!!!

I'm, like, crying right now, I'm so HAPPY!!!!!!!!!! Once again, I'm saying thank you!!!!!

PS: I'm making a second book called 'Whirlpool's Sacrifice'. So check that book out too!!!!

Thank you all, guys!!!!